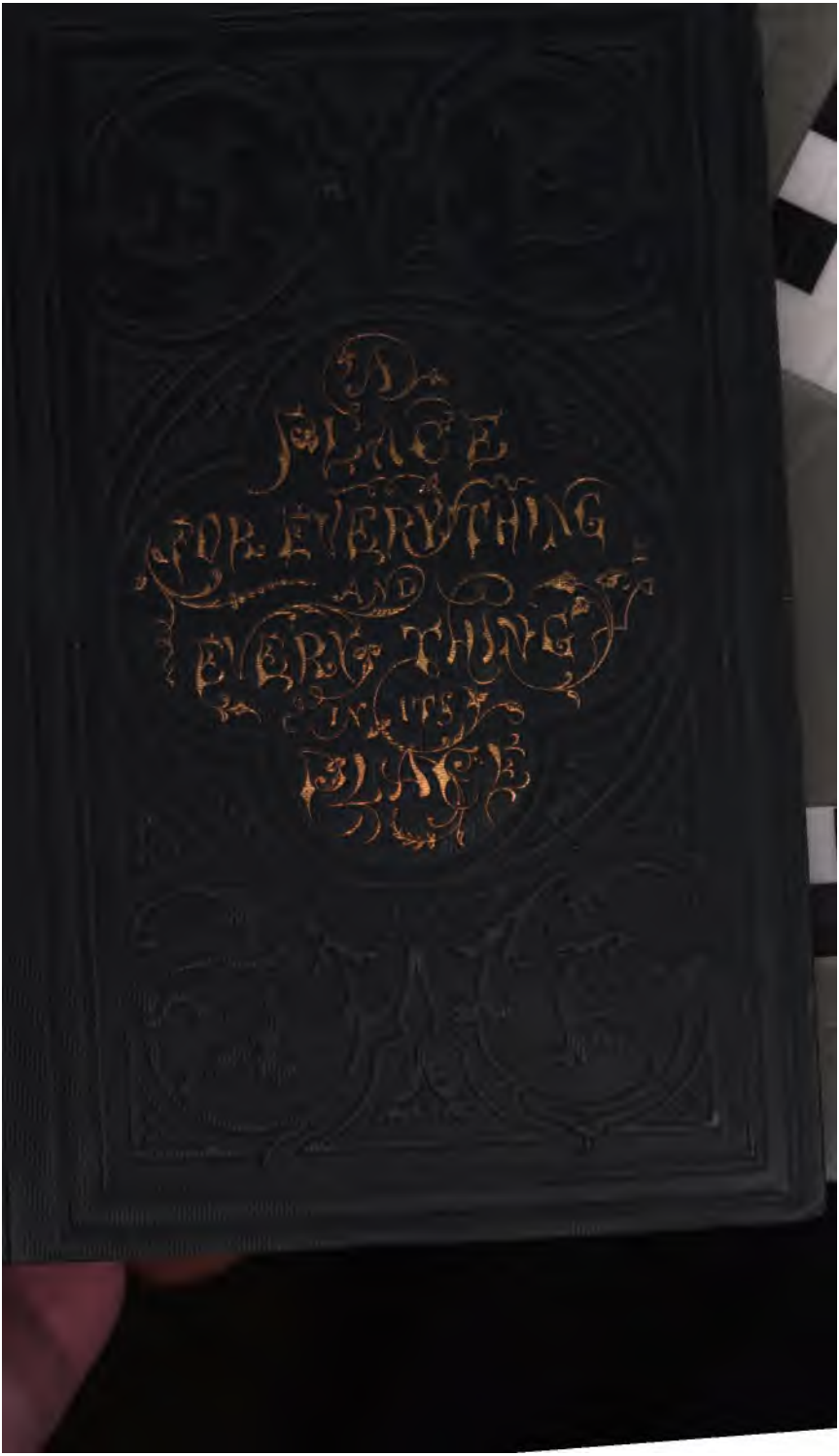
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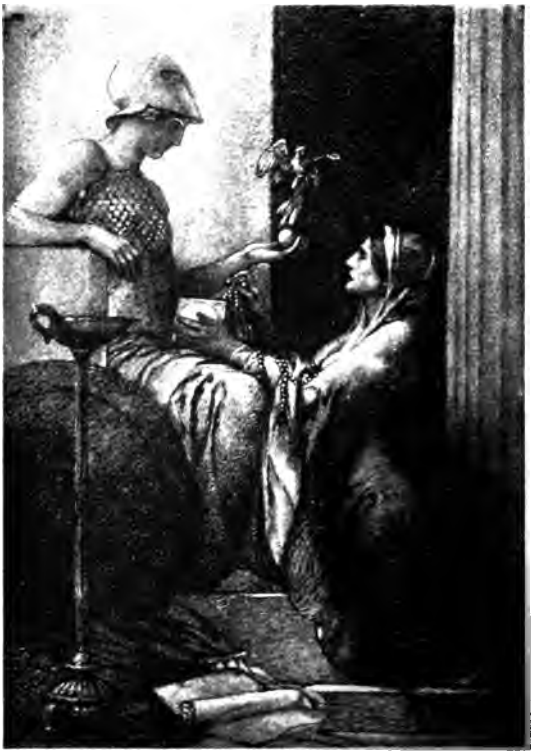

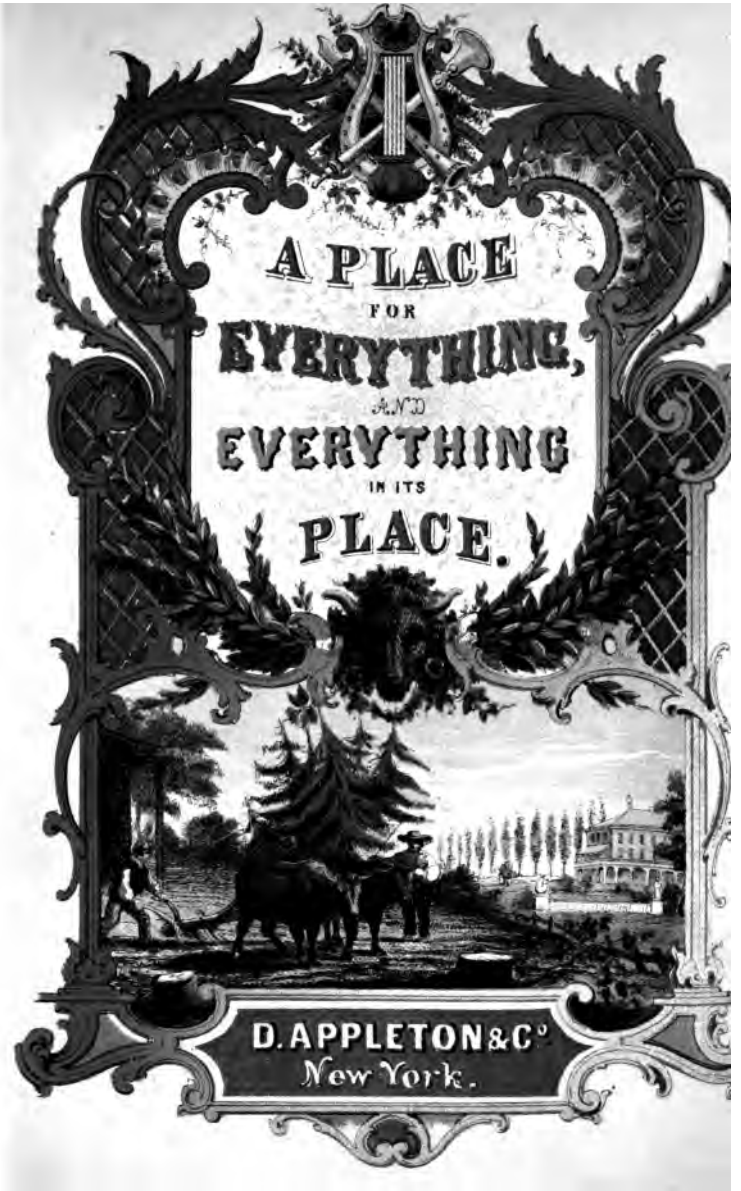
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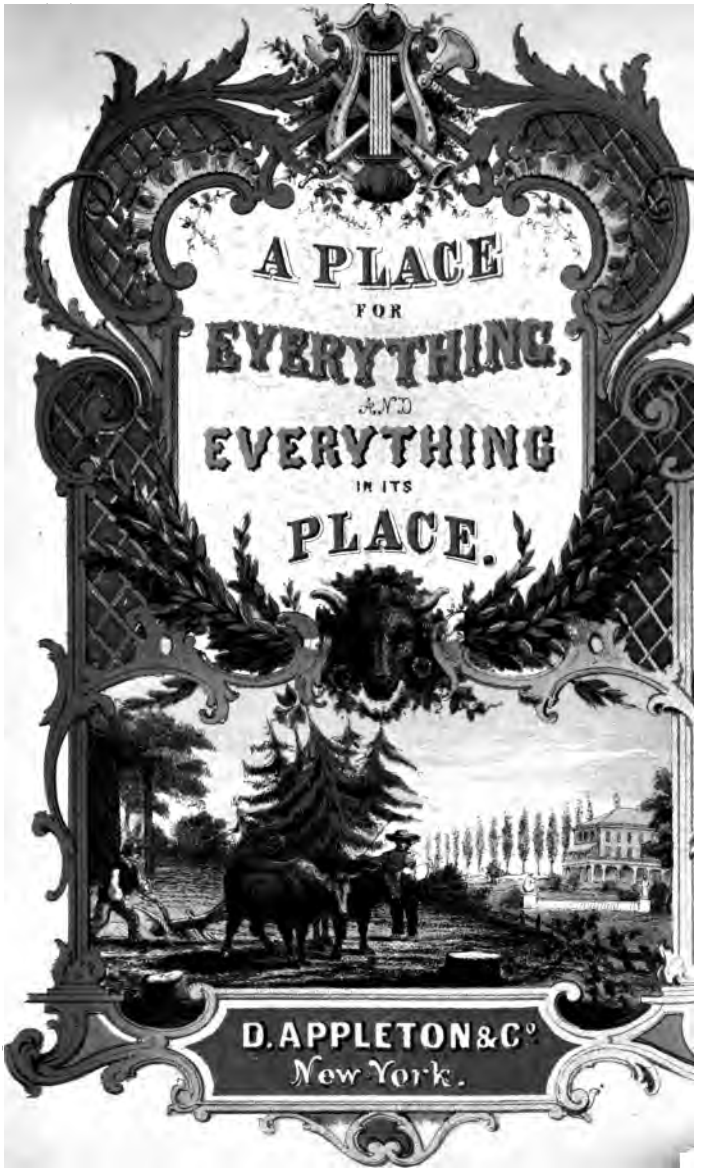
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A PLACE FOR EVERY THING;

AND

Every Thing in its Place.

BY

ALICE B. HAVEN.

(COUSIN ALICE.)

AUTHOR OF "NO SUCH WORD AS FAIL," "CONTENTMENT BETTER THAN WEALTH," "OUT OF DEBT OUT OF DANGER," &c., &c.

NEW YORK:
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346 & 348 BROADWAY.
1857.

THE SEVENTH HOME BOOK.

I DARE say that all my little people will think they understand the purpose of the seventh "Home Book" sufficiently well from the title, without further words between us.

"'A place for every thing! and every thing in its place!' Oh to be sure, Cousin Alice is going to lecture us on neatness and order,—I get enough of that every day, from mamma, and at school."

And this is indeed the obvious plan of the history of Clara Sherman's western life; but deeper still, you will find some reasons that may be new to you for the steady cultivation of correct and diligent habits: That without them our present happiness and future usefulness are greatly lessened; that carelessness, and ignorance, and the neglect of the refinements of life, where it is in our power to

act differently, cause not only discomfort, but evil and wrong to ourselves and others;—that our desks, and drawers, and rooms should be always in order, but more important still, our minds and hearts rightly trained, and carefully regulated. To accomplish these things we have one chief text book, open to all students, young and old, the rich and the poor alike; for

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."

And now that you have patiently taken the lecture in advance, I have only to add the good wishes of COUSIN ALICE.

LOCUST COTTAGE, 1857.

CONTENTS.

A Place for Every Thing;

AND EVERY THING IN ITS PLACE.

CHAPTER I.

THE TRAVELLERS.

"WHAT landing is this, Captain?"

"Sheridan's."

"Do we make any stop here?"

The captain, who was a tall, stout, but indolent-looking man, turned around shortly, as if he was not put there for the purpose of answering questions. The gentleman who had asked him, did not seem offended. He had nothing else to do, and liked to talk; that was all; but a knot of little people who were crowding around the sliding-door, on the verge of forbidden ground, found something very interesting in the conversation.

"I don't see any *place*," said a tall boy, who had a handful of ground-nuts, or "gauber-peas," as the steward called them.

"Nor I," said his sister; "only a pile of wood—what a long pile, and such funny little sticks: see, Augustus!"

"That is not wood! it's pig-iron—I heard the captain say so!"

"Pig-iron? how funny! don't crowd me so, Dolly Dumpling; you can see out of the state-room door: run away to mother."

"Pid! pid!" cried out the round, little lady, called Dolly Dumpling by all her brothers and sisters. She could just talk a little, and walk a little, and was always in the way; for her nurse liked to gossip with the chambermaid, or the steward, or any one she could find to talk to her, and Dolly had her own will at such times.

"Sheridan's what?" asked her oldest sister, watching the deck hands bring the slow, unwieldy "Reliance" up to the high bank on top of which the iron was piled. No wonder she asked the question. There was no dock, or wharf-boat, no *levee* as at Evansville and Madison, and other places where they had stopped; only the crumbling, muddy path to the freight the captain intended to take on board.

"Sheridan's Furnace, I believe," said the good-natured gentleman who asked questions; "but the buildings must be at some distance from the landing. I don't see even a chimney."

"Way off dah—sir," said one of the steward's boys, who came to the door, dust-brush in hand, and pointed with it to a wreath of smoke at some little distance, floating up as lazily as every thing else seemed to move this soft spring morning.

"What makes you look so funny, Clara—I should think you were going to cry?" said Augustus, turning suddenly to a little girl nearly as tall as his sister, who was indeed looking ready for an April shower.

"I think—I believe, this is it—I must go and ask your mother."

"The place you were going to? oh, I hope not," said Julia Andrews.

"So do I," said Augustus, "it won't be half the fun without you, and I don't care how soon we get to Paducah."

Julia raced away up the large saloon, Clara followed more slowly, and the two children were met by Mrs. Andrews, coming out of her state-room to look for them.

"The chambermaid tells me this is Sheri-

dan's, my dear," she said in a pleasant, cheerful voice. "We shall be sorry to part with you, but I know you will be glad to see your friends, and we must not be selfish."

"I don't think she is glad, mother."

Clara did not look so, that is true, as she stood holding Mrs. Andrews' hand tightly, and trying to hide the tears that made the cabin seem like a mist, by opening her eyes very wide, and holding them so with an upward frown, very funny to behold, if it had not shown that the child was really troubled.

"I don't know them—I never saw them, and oh, Mrs. Andrews, you have been so very good to me, and so has Julia and Augustus, and little Dolly is such a funny little tot! oh, dear!"

"You did not know us until a week ago," said Mrs. Andrews, passing her hand over the child's hair soothingly. "No doubt your uncle and cousins will be just as good to you."

She did not think it was best for her little charge to talk much of this, even in trying to comfort her. "Are all your things ready? I do not know how long the captain intends to stop; I hope you have not much to put up."

"I don't believe she has any thing; she always takes care of her things just as you do,

mother." It was a great mystery to Julia how her new friend remembered to do any thing like a grown woman. She, herself, always intended to, but went flying off with three hooks unfastened, and only one side of her hair braided, half the time, when they were dressing in the morning. Sometimes it was to romp with Dolly, or to hang over the railing of the guards, on which the state-room door opened, to watch some sweet little island where she and Augustus longed to play Robinson Crusoe. Then there was a great commotion and flurry when the breakfast bell rang, and twice since they left Pittsburg she had gone without any thing until lunch time in punishment of her heedlessness.

Mrs. Andrews found her little charge comparatively no trouble. She had even been an assistance in reminding Julia, who shared the same state-room, adjoining her own, of these troublesome duties. She had but a very slight acquaintance with the gentleman who had placed Clara under her care, and at first was inclined to think he was imposing upon her good nature, when she had three children of her own to see to, and was going down the river alone to join her husband. But the little girl unconsciously won her way to the kind woman's

heart. She was an orphan, and very sensitive; evidently well taught and trained by the mother for whom she wore a deep mourning dress. In the long and idle days they had already been floating down the Ohio, the children had grown very intimate, and Mrs. Andrews knew that it would be hard for them to separate.

"I have only to change my slippers for walking-shoes, now," said Clara, as her friend came to the door a few minutes after. "My combs and brushes are put up, and my night-dress—I think I have not forgotten any thing."

Her hands were not quite steady, as she tried to turn the key which was hung around her neck by a narrow, black ribbon. "I have the key of my trunk in here, Mrs. Andrews. Do you suppose any one has come for it, or for me?" she said more slowly.

"We will see when you get your bonnet on, let me tie it for you."

Mrs. Andrews looked earnestly into the childish face thus raised to her own. How soon might her children be thrown among strangers, in the sudden changes of life, was her thought.

"How glad I am that I had the opportunity to do this little kindness—how selfish I was to consider it a trouble at first!" And she still held the chin beneath which she had tied the

ribbon, and stooped down to kiss the child; not her mouth, but her eyes, that had shed so many lonely tears thus early in life.

"God bless you, Clara, I am sorry to lose you so soon;" and then with a sudden, motherly thought: "never mind the first lonely feelings, or the new faces. Whatever your cousins may be, you have been well taught, and you must draw them your way, if your way is best, and not give up to theirs. You had your mother so much the longest, that you can remember best," she added, as the little girl looked up wonderingly.

It was a new thing to be told; she had always been taught to give up her own way in every thing.

Mrs. Andrews seemed to think of this. "I would not have you wilful, or obstinate; that is not what I meant—you will understand some day; all you have to think of now, is not to forget what you have been taught, to grow careless and untidy for one thing."

She had allowed herself to say more than she intended, but she knew that Clara was no doubt going to a rougher life than she had been accustomed to, and she wished to prepare her for it.

"Oh! do you think I shall be carried off?"

said the child suddenly, diverted by the slow splash of the great wheel at the stern of the boat, and a fresh puff from the hoarse engine, which had been still for a few moments.

"Th'a aint no hurry," said the chamber-maid, putting her head over Mrs. Andrews' shoulder with very little ceremony. "Our cappen's one 'them kind, never knows when he's got enuff. He won't stir a step tell he has the hull lot 'that pig-iron aboard."

"There I tole you so," as the boat-hands, having made the "Reliance" fast to the convenient stump of a tree, clambered up the bank, and began tossing the bars down to the narrow shelf of sand that served as a beach.

"There's nobody come for you." Augustus and Julia had been on a voyage of discovery, and came back with this information.

"She'll have to go with us after all—won't she, mother? You won't care, will you, Clara? It's a poky old place."

"Poky, Julia," said Mrs. Andrews, reprovingly; "where did you hear that? I wish you were as quick to copy graces as rudeness."

They had been going towards the door, and as Mrs. Andrews said this, one of the gentlemen—the same who had spoken to the children, arose from his seat on a pile of baggage, and came towards them.

"Is there any thing I can do for you, madam?—your nurse has the little girl; I saw her but a moment since."

Mrs. Andrews smiled. "Eliza does not happen to be the trouble now. I have sent after her so often, though, I do not wonder at your thought. It is about this little girl. Would you be so good as to inquire of the captain whether any one has come for her?"

"The captain shakes his head," said Augustus, watching the interview. "Now he's pointing up the river; I think your uncle lives up there, Clara."

"The captain thinks it is not probable he is expected," said their messenger returning. "These boats are so uncertain, and he tells me that the only two people in the neighborhood who would be likely to claim this young lady, are the Sheridans at the furnace or a Mr. Sherman, about a mile up the road. Shermansville, the post-office town, is named after him."

"It's my uncle," said Clara, quickly, alive to the grandeur of having an uncle with a town for his namesake. The other children thought it fine, too. "He ought to have sent his carriage after you," said Augustus.

Mr. Bowen, their friendly fellow-passenger, smiled.

"You don't know much about Crittenden county yet, my boy, or this part of it, at any rate. I think the best way will be for me to escort Miss Clara to her relatives."

"That would be quite too much trouble. I dare say the captain will send some one with her."

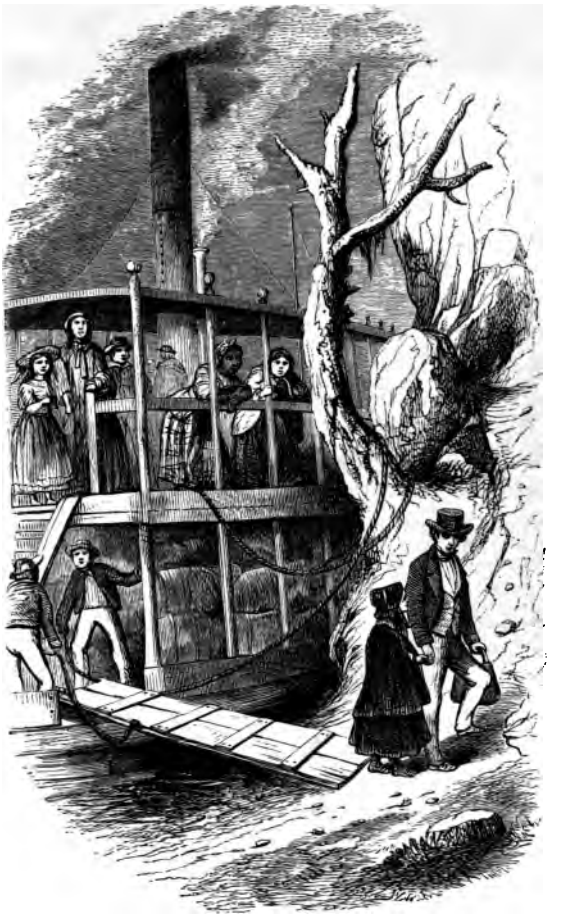
"Not at all. We shall be detained here all the morning, most probably. The walk would brighten me up."

"But, my trunk, Mr. Bowen?"

"Oh! that is safe enough here on the landing, and no doubt Mr. Sherman will send for it at once."

Clara was obliged to agree; but having eastern landings in remembrance, she thought it extremely unsafe, and began to make up her mind heroically, never to see her cherished possessions again. Julia and Augustus were clamorous to accompany her; but Mrs. Andrews knew that Clara was going through a hard ordeal in meeting relatives she had never seen before, and that it would be easier if she was alone.

"I knew they'd have a time of it," said Eliza apart to the chambermaid, who, having nothing in particular to do, was leaning on her folded arms over the guard rail, and watching



the parting. "See how Julia goes on, just as if she was a relation, for all the world. I don't see what there is in her, for my part,—she ain't handsome like Julia, and just as set in her way as any old maid you ever see."

"She's a handy little thing, anyhow," and the girl nodded her neatly turbaned head towards Clara, as she crossed the plank, holding timidly by Mr. Bowen's hand. "I guess her Ma made her mind, and so it comes natural. Now jess' look at her once, goin' up that bank, with her black frock, and clean, white pantalettes—she's tall to wear pantalettes, though, ain't she? most 'leven year old she says. Well, I hope they'll be good to her, where she's goin'."

It was hard work, climbing the steep, crumbling bank, even with Mr. Bowen's assistance. Clara stood still for a moment, quite out of breath, and waved her handkerchief to Julia as she had promised to. The salute was returned most vigorously, and Mr. Bowen, taking her by one hand and her carpet-bag in the other, she was led from the brow of the cliff, and in a moment was out of sight to her little friends below.

CHAPTER II.

THE SEARCH.

"YOUR father and the Mr. Sherman we want to find were brothers," said Mr. Bowen, by way of making Clara feel at her ease; "I saw Sherman on the trunk. It's a large trunk for a little girl—you must be going to stay some time."

"Always," she answered, simply.

Mr. Bowen did not speak again for a little while. He seemed to be looking for the road the captain said he would find "just back there."

There was a road, tolerably broad and smooth, but that led to the furnace, and was constantly travelled. The other, up the bank of the river, was little more than a cart track, winding through a tall grove of cottonwood trees, with scathed-looking trunks, and high, bare branches. Some of the undergrowth

was green with early spring foliage, and the grass was making its way over the heaps of withered leaves and dead brown twigs. Close to the road-side it was green and soft as velvet, dotted with tufts of violet leaves and common wild flowers. It seemed very fresh and spring-like to the little city girl.

Mr. Bowen watched her as she stooped down to a root of violets. "No blossoms yet—rather early; but plenty to come. Do you like the country?"

"I don't know, sir; I never lived in it. We lived in Boston before father died, and then we came to Pittsburg; but I knew the violets, because mother planted some where father is buried, before we came away." She did not say any thing about her mother's lonely grave, lonely though in a crowded city church-yard. She thought of it; but that was too recent a grief and too great a one to speak of to a stranger.

"I hope we are on the right road; I do not see any signs of a house so far. Perhaps the people in that log cabin can tell us."

So the funny little brown shed she had been looking at was really a log cabin, such as she had read about! Clara looked at it with renewed interest as Mr. Bowen went to inquire. It seemed very still and strange, standing there

alone in the wood. She could scarcely believe the broad Ohio was sweeping along just behind the trees, and that the busy little world she had left on the "Reliance" was so near. She almost expected to see a friendly Indian start up before her, or a troop of deer come down to drink at the smooth pond she could just get a glimpse of in a hollow beyond. She had read stories about the West, in which such things happened, and when they first came to Pittsburg six months before, she had asked some one about it. They told her Pittsburg was no longer "out West." She would have to go to Kentucky, or Illinois, or Iowa for the "West."

Mr. Bowen could not make any one hear. "We must look for ourselves," he said, coming back after he had knocked on the wooden door and the wooden window shutters in vain. "It is really quite warm walking; but I think it much nicer than hovering over a coal fire, as we were doing last week this time."

"I was just thinking of that, sir; "and Clara put her hand in his again. "I wore my cloak when I came on the boat, and it seemed so odd to see the trees get greener and greener as we came along, and then to put on a chintz dress as if it was summer, and now to find the

grass, and the sunshine so warm, and only to wear my bonnet,—it's just like a fairy tale."

"I wonder if we shall find the Enchanted Castle,—do you know what kind of a house your uncle lives in?"

"No, sir; but it must be a large one I think, because he's very rich,—white, with green blinds and a piazza." Clara had but one idea of a country house, the neat villas in the environs of Boston. "Do you think they will have a flower garden?"

Mr. Bowen, who had a large experience as a traveller in the western and south-western States, scarcely thought there would be one.

"But *you* will have a very large garden. See all these woods; they will be full of flowers and birds, birds that I like to hear sing better than any canary I ever saw."

"I might take some of them up by the roots and carry them home, I suppose, if my cousins don't care for such things; but there's another log cabin, see, on the top of the hill, and some cows. Oh, what beauties! black and red, and there's one all white, just going to drink at the pond. What a nice, smooth pond! Don't you think the country is lovely, Mr. Bowen?"

"By way of a change," said that gentleman, shrugging his shoulders. "There seems to be

quite a collection of houses; suppose we stop here and inquire."

At the brow of the little knoll they were just ascending the road widened, and beyond it was comparatively smooth and well beaten. A rude guide-board told them, in straggling, black letters, that it was five miles to Shermansville. On one side of the bank the hill sloped gently down to the grassy hollow, where the cows were feeding in a smooth, green meadow beyond the pond. On the other side a short lane led to a barn-yard, where a horse was pulling hay through the crevices of the logs, and fields well cleared and already ploughed, came in sight as they walked onward.

"I expect we shall find out all about it here," said Mr. Bowen; "it seems to be a good farm, and where there are fields, and horses, and barns, there must be people within a hundred miles."

But there was no one in sight, even when they came to a stile with rough plank steps, on which Mr. Bowen made the little girl sit down while he went towards one of the out-houses to inquire. Clara was very glad to rest. It was nearly noon, and the sun almost overpowering to one who had come so lately from the snow and ice of Pittsburg, without the long transi-

tion of a northern spring. Besides, she was unaccustomed to walking on a road, and she hoped Mr. Bowen would come back and say her uncle's house was just beyond the next clump of trees.

She had plenty of time to look about her before her escort came back; for he seemed to change his mind after he had gone a little way, and walked off to the very farthest cabin of the hollow square which the low cluster of buildings made; and which was fenced in from the road on one side, and the field on the other. They were all built of logs, like the barn, and the spaces between them filled in with clay. Some were very old, and almost black; two, larger than the rest, had windows and doors. Smoke, wreathing up from funny little chimneys, on several of the smallest ones, told that they were also inhabited.

There was a great fussing and squeaking of pigs in a small enclosure near her, and plenty of poultry parading the yard, and picking up an honest living near the corn crib. To one accustomed to the country every thing spoke of abundance, and a certain rude comfort; but Clara, fanning herself with her bonnet on the topmost step of the stile, looked around with very pitying eyes.

"Poor people! I'm glad I don't have to live here, in such a queer little low house, with only square logs for steps, and such little *mites* of windows," she thought.

"Such a great muddy yard, too! no boards, or stone walks, or a bit of a garden. I wonder if there are any little girls here! I wonder what they do with themselves all day. I suppose my cousins never come to see them. There are some little black heads. Oh! I know there must be negroes living here, and perhaps they are slaves, and can't afford any better houses. I wish I wasn't so afraid of black people; but I can't help it—mother told me so many times it was foolish, and Mrs. Andrews says all the servants are black here. How long Mr. Bowen is gone! Oh! there he is; he's found somebody! That old man's going to show him! No, he isn't—yes, he is—no, he's not after all. I think Mr. Bowen is beckoning to me; why, what can he want me to come there for, and I'm so tired already, and it's so muddy!"

Mr. Bowen *was* beckoning to her, and did not offer to come back across the yard. Clara tied on her bonnet, and looked at the mud and then at her morocco boots; but there was no help for it. Down she slid from her high perch,

and picked her way slowly towards the largest house, before which Mr. Bowen stood.

He was talking to an old man, who wore a palm-leaf hat, and had his hands in his pockets. He had left his coat in the house, too, as if "going in shirt sleeves" was quite natural to him.

The stooping shoulders, bent by many an hour of hard toil, in the woods and fields, when his now thriving farm was only "a clearing" in the wilderness,—the stiff gray beard, and slouched hat, made Clara almost afraid to approach him, even under Mr. Bowen's protection.

"So this is the little gal!" he said, as she came up. Clara wondered how Mr. Bowen came to talk about *her* to such a person!

"Well, you must make yourself to hum; I do'no where any on 'em is jist now, but dinner's most ready, an' they'll be sure to be round then."

Mr. Bowen saw, by the wondering look his little charge turned from one to the other, that she did not understand the address.

"This is your uncle, Mr. Sherman, Clara; he did not know when to expect you, or one of your cousins would have been at the landing to meet you."

"Them boats is so unsartain," said Mr. Sherman, taking no further notice of his niece. "It all depends on the cappen an' the freight; boats is plenty and freights scarce just now—the river's up. Your cappen can't have much aboard, or he wouldn't stop for pig iron—it's the wust of any thing. Well, so this is Jim's darter,—as I was tellin' you, I took the land, and he a college eddication. You see how *I've* got along, and he took to preachin', and died without a cent. Better go in, I guess?"

This was an invitation for Mr. Bowen to re-enter the log-house. He was not particularly anxious to continue the interview, but he looked at Clara, and saw, by the working of her face, the painful disappointment she was struggling with, though as yet scarcely understood.

She had heard all her life that her father's only brother owned a large plantation in Kentucky, and was very rich. The captain had said so too; but why did he live in this way, and dress so meanly? The child's idea of wealth had never been divided from refinement and luxury. She herself had known economy, and even privation; but to be rich meant, in her day-dreams, to live in a large house, with an elegant garden, with servants to wait on every body, and to ride in an easy carriage, with a

pair of shining black horses and silver-plated harness. When she knew that she was to live with her rich uncle, and be as one of his own children (so his friends in Pittsburg had told her), this was the life she had expected to lead.

There was an absence to all care or anxiety about money, such as she could always recollect in her own home,—and she had even prayed, conscious that a proud and selfish spirit was rising up at such thoughts, that she might never forget or be ashamed of the time when she was poor, with her dear father and mother.

She followed Mr. Bowen into the house, and kept as near him as she could, while he did stay. The life she had been afraid of despising, seemed so desirable to her now, she feared lest even the memory might go with him, the last link uniting her with it.

Mr. Sherman did not seem to think it necessary to talk to her any more; but asked Mr. Bowen the latest political news, and what prices flour and corn were bringing by the last steamer. So she sat still upon a trunk, the first low seat which presented itself, and looked around her new home.

The room was large, for it occupied the whole ground floor, and was ceiled roughly overhead. There were three square windows, so

that it was well lighted,—besides, the door always stood open in warm weather, as she afterwards found. Opposite to this was a huge fireplace, with a mantel-shelf above, piled with the oddest collection of articles that were ever put together. It seemed to be the general receptacle for all small articles,—seed corn, iron bolts and hinges; a few books, well worn and well smoked; cups without handles, a pitcher, a pewter tumbler, candlesticks, pipes, a box of tobacco, and many other things she could not even guess the use of. A square cherry-wood table stood under one window, almost equally filled,—a wide bedstead on each side of the door, some rush-bottomed chairs, and an old-fashioned mahogany desk and chest of drawers united; a "secretary"—the family called it—made up the furniture of the apartment.

The wooden floor was not even painted; a dog—and she dreaded dogs—lay winking and snapping at flies in the sunshine at his master's feet,—and this was the family room, parlor, dining-room, and bed-chamber, but not kitchen.

While she was trying to make out whether there was any "up stairs" to the house, and how people could reach the second story, provided there was one, Mr. Bowen broke off the conversation politely, and looked at his watch.

"You needn't be in no hurry," said Mr. Sherman, to whom a visitor was a rarity. "Pig iron aint so easy to load."

"Oh dear, my uncle uses bad grammar, and father was so particular to make me speak so correctly." A faint remembrance of hard lessons in syntax, interrupted Clara's survey of the premises, and the good cry she had had over the rule, "two negatives destroy one another, and are equal to one affirmative." "He doesn't look like father, either; I wonder how it happened. Oh, I wish Mr. Bowen would not go so soon. I hope he won't tell Augustus and Julia how queer he talks, and what a little mean house it is,—real "poky," just as Julia said.

Mr. Bowen was already saying good morning. He wished her good-bye, and said he should report to her friends on the "Reliance" that "it was all right."

Clara did not think it was; "all wrong" would have been nearer the truth, according to her opinion. Her uncle walked off with Mr. Bowen across the yard; and, just as she began to feel the relief of being left alone for a moment, a young man, whose looks she liked very much, though he was in his shirt sleeves, too, came in hastily, and began turning over the

contents of the upper drawer of the bureau, in search of something.

He did not see her, as she sat on the low trunk at the foot of the bed; but exclaimed, impatiently to himself,

"I do wish these little torments would leave my things alone. I never saw such a house—you never can find any thing when you want it!"

Just then he caught sight of Clara in her black dress, sitting as mute as a statue, and watching him with a great deal of curiosity.

They both looked at each other for a minute without speaking, and the young man thought of a story he had somewhere heard, of a lady who was obliged to hang her canary bird out of the room, its bright black eyes disturbed her so much. He could not imagine for a moment where this equally quiet and observant spectator had sprung from. He had quite forgotten that his cousin was coming to live with them. Henry Sherman did not like children. There were several years difference in the ages of himself and the rest of the family, and they were always in his way. He was quiet, they were noisy; he liked to keep his possessions to himself, and they did not seem to have the least idea of "hands off"—his favorite warning. If he had any special feeling when it first

crossed his mind that this silent little figure must be his cousin, it was the inhospitable reflection that "there would be another one always under foot."

So he only nodded his head, continued his search in silence, found what he wanted, and carried it off with him to the carpenter's bench, from which he seemed to have come, judging from the shavings which clung to his dress.

CHAPTER III.

THE HOUSEHOLD.

MR. SHERMAN did not return to the house immediately, and Clara was thinking she might as well take off her bonnet and mantle, which no one had asked her to do, when a turbaned head appeared at the door, and a good-natured black face gave her the first real smile of welcome she had yet received.

"Laws, honey—taint quite time to set table," the woman said, preparing to drag out, instead of lifting the article of furniture in question, "but I tho't you'd feel strange, an so I cum to keep you company a while. You cum in the boat 'Rod' says is down to the landin' I s'pose. I went in one them boats once to Louisvil long of mistris,—mi! I was skared all the time. You're got jest that look too, wa'nt it awful?"

Unaccustomed to the familiarity of family servants at the South and West, Clara scarcely

knew how to answer this address, but her silence did not seem to trouble her entertainer.

"I was raised long 'o mistris, so I don't disremember Master Jim,—but old Rachel she does,—she's high bout seein you, 'cause you'r his chile. I tho't I'd tell you, cause she's got the misery in her back so she can't git along so wery well. Joe, that's her boy—he's my husband, and my name's Lecta—mistris was fond of fancy names, so's I. My oldest gal—she's named for sum'er mistris folks to Memphis, Margret-Ann-Eliza-Bell-Ellen-Perry-Lullerberry Stradd."

Electra, or Lecta as she was usually called, paused in her operations, and folded her arms complacently as she recited this list of appellations in the composed drawling tone of a boy giving the exceptions to a rule in Latin grammar. She desired to make an impression on the new arrival, of her own dignity, and her importance with the family.

"So's my oldest boy,—his father got Marster Henry to call him. Joe thinks a heap o' Marster Henry, so he studied awhile, cause he knew Joe didn't want nothin common, and then he wrote it down on a piece 'er paper, and I got mistris to read it to me till I got it to say. I'll tell it to you"—and poising herself as be-

fore, against the bedstead post, she repeated in the same tone—

"'Alexander-James-Washington-Bridney-Rodney-Costum Giles'—he's generally 'Brid' —or 'Rod.'"

Clara thought it was well, there was something shorter to call this sable youth by, and said so to his mothor as she asked her where she should put her bonnet.

"Oh, most anywhere, we aint no ways pertikerlar; mistris was, but marster isn't, so we isn't. On top of the secretary's a good place, I guess. Youv'e got real nice things,—who made 'em?"

Lecta took up the bonnet and mantle, and turned them over and around as coolly as possible.

"Oh, I was talking 'bout fancy names. Well —when my next boy was born, I teld mistris, I was gwine to have a fancy name; that was to please her 'cause she was sick, and she liked um. So I called him Simeon. Don't you think Simeon's mighty handsum, now, for a fancy name, sumthin unexpected"

It was quite unexpected, and her hearer's demure, and in fact miserable little face began to brighten into a smile. She thought Lecta was very amusing indeed, and that she looked

young to be the mother of such a family. She watched her as she opened a closet, on one side of the fire-place, and brought out a collection of the most common earthenware, scarcely two pieces of which were alike. The table-cloth, after a long search, came out of the top drawer, from which Henry Sherman had just taken a chisel and lump of putty.

"I disremembered where I put it—" Lecta explained, seeing Clara's curious look.

"Don't you always keep it there?"—she asked, wishing to say something, and wondering if it really was the place for the table-cloth.

"Laws no, honey, sometimes here, and sometimes there, jest as it cums."

It was arranged with the same disregard to precision; Clara longed to get up, and put it even. At home she had always laid the table, for much of the time her mother had not been able to keep any regular assistance in the kitchen, and Clara had been taught all the lighter household tasks. It made her feel uncomfortable to see the dishes going on in such a confused fashion, but she judged rightly that the handmaid who had such a remarkably good opinion of herself, would not take any interference or suggestions kindly.

"I s'pose master's gone to hunt up some of

'em; they don't agree so well together, and ginerally goes to theirselves—not to say them two youngest ones; 'cause, where you'll find the boys, pears like Miss Liza's never far off. She an' them agrees, but she an'—here she comes—there, there's your t'other cousin now: you don't know her, I s'pose?"

All that Clara knew was the names of her cousins, and that Margaret was older than herself, Eliza being just her age. Margaret had not a pleasant-looking face; she was ill dressed and awkward, a great disappointment to the stranger watching her so eagerly as she came towards the open door. Clara felt that she should never be able to put her arms around her waist, and kiss her, as she had often done to Julia Andrews even in their short acquaintance. Eliza was less lovable still, as she came scampering over the yard at full speed, her two younger brothers after her, while she held as high as she could reach, something she had snatched from one of them.

"Where is she—when did she come?" she called out boisterously to Electa, who was on her way to the kitchen, a cabin at some distance from the house; but, not waiting for an answer, "bounced" up the steps, throwing a knife over her shoulders at one of her pursuers, as she did so.

"There, try it again, you see I can beat you;" and then, as if Clara had been a doll, to be turned around and criticised, she said in the same breath, "She isn't so big as I am, after all, Mag; you'll sleep with me, won't you? Mag says you shan't, but you needn't mind her, I don't. Let me alone, boys—I'll tell father of you."

Clara shrank back from them all. She did not know which was the most disagreeable—Margaret's neglectful rudeness, or Eliza's forward, bold manner. As for the boys, they were perfect little savages, disputing, in a loud tone, over a chair they had both seized at the same time. Mr. Sherman did not appear to take any notice of it, when he came in, or they to mind his presence, but the uproar was quieted a little by Henry's entrance. They all seemed to have some slight awe of him.

There was nothing done in the way of a toilet for dinner; the children gathered around the table exactly as they came in. She could not make up her mind for some minutes what to do herself. Heated and weary with her walk, she longed at least to bathe her face and hands, and to brush the hair back from her temples. But no one offered to show her a place where this could be.

done, and she did not feel sufficiently acquainted to ask; so, in the end, she found herself seated between Eliza and Albert, the youngest boy, with a heaped-up plate of food before her, provided by Lecta's care.

Electra was now assisted by her two children, "Rod" and his sister, whose list of names was also brought to a point for common usage. Out of the great variety, the family had settled down on Bel, and Bel seemed to have the same good opinion of herself that was so noticeable in her mother. They had helped to bring the various dishes from the kitchen, separately, instead of using a tray for the purpose, and consequently, by the time dinner was served, every thing was quite cold. Both Rod and Bel were supposed to be there for the purpose of waiting on the table; but, instead of which, they were most of the time following the example of their betters, and quarrelling with each other by the window;—dodging a box on the ear from their mother, as she passed by, and returning to their amusement.

Clara expected every moment to hear Mr. Sherman reprove them, but he did not appear to notice it any more than the disputes of his own children. As for her cousin Henry, he seemed to be thinking of something else all the

while; he ate as fast as possible, caught up his hat and was off again, before Clara had brought herself to taste a mouthful.

There was so much food on the table, and so much on her plate, that it took away her appetite. Before Mr. Sherman was set a whole boiled ham, and a huge dish of cabbage. There were sweet potatoes, and Irish potatoes, hominy white as snow, turnips and "greens," as Lecta called some variety of spinach, but all cold and ill-drained from the water they had been boiled in. Pickles and apple sauce, a dish of fried chickens swimming in melted butter, and a large dried apple pie, were set together on the side of the table where she had been placed.

As might have been expected, no one waited to be helped; they all used their own knives and spoons in the dish they wanted, and the greatest confusion of tongues and clatter of dishes prevailed. There was no castor, no napkins, the table-cloth doing a napkin's duty. Mr. Sherman and Henry took their pie without waiting for the table to be cleared, and this seemed to be the usual fashion of the family, and not because of any special haste. Clara was faint for want of food, yet all she could eat was a bit of chicken, which she freed very carefully from the melted butter; and hominy

rescued from beneath a spoonful of cabbage, which was equally distasteful to her. She was not dainty, but she had been accustomed to very plain and simple fare, nicely cooked and neatly served, although every one in her own home waited on themselves and others. For a year before her father's death, it had been her place to remove the meat and vegetables to a side table, and brush the crumbs from the cloth, before the pie or pudding, or even the plate of apples, which oftentimes alone made the dessert, was set on. She would much rather have done this now, than attempt to eat her pie, which was what she thought she should like best, in the midst of such confusion.

Lecta cleared the table very speedily when she came to it, for the remains went into old Rachel's cabin, "the kitchen," as it was generally called, for their own benefit. The ham had scarcely been touched, and there was a whole mound of vegetables, but none of these things ever made their appearance again. A fresh ham, or "shoulder," was given out from the smoke-house, almost every morning; and what vegetables Lecta and her children did not make way with, went to the pigs and chickens, who came daily for the abundance and plenty they were sure to find around the kitchen door.

Mr. Sherman moved his chair back, tilted it on two legs, leaned his head against the wall, and threw a handkerchief over his face, for the mid-day nap in which he always indulged. From habit he still rose at day break, but in warm weather, he made up for his early rising in this way. He was no longer able to be out all day in the fields, and gradually trusted more and more to Henry, who was fully able to direct the "hands," as they were called. He was not an old man, though there was a difference of ten years in the ages of his only brother and himself; Clara's father had long been settled in Boston, when he married, and Mr. Sherman had shortened his best days by harder toil than he now exacted from any of his people.

He had loved his wife and his children as well as most people, he thought, but the object of his life had been to make money,—"hard dollars" as he often said, and this he had accomplished. Spending money he did not believe in,—not that he was miserly, as his free way of living for himself and his servants showed,—but so they had a roof over them, plenty to eat, wood to burn, and clothes to wear, he could not see what was the use of any thing more.

The younger children went off to their usual

play ground in warm or wet weather,—the space under the corn house, made by the posts on which it was elevated, to be removed from dampness, or the threatened invasion of field mice. It was certainly a ground-floor apartment, and not very lofty, but they liked it all the better for that; and here they passed whole days, usually surrounded by admiring followers, and often playfellows from the cabins, with Rod and Bel at their head.

Left alone with her cousin Margaret, who seemed to have some remote idea that she was expected to entertain the new comer, Clara ventured to ask where she should put her "things,"—for by this inelegant title little girls most frequently designate their out-of-door costume. She had also her carpet bag to dispose of, and thought she should feel less miserable if she could "*do* her hair," another phrase peculiar to a very young lady's vocabulary.

Curiosity being a trait of Margaret's disposition, she very readily opened the door corresponding with the closet, on the opposite side of the mantle, and ushered her up a narrow steep flight of stairs, to a room above. It was low and sloping, but there was a good floor and stairs, instead of the open rafters and ladder Clara had heard of as a part of the usual ar-

rangements in log houses. She felt so much relieved, that she made a decided attempt at being sociable and friendly with Margaret, and they were soon talking away as fast as Clara's nimble fingers flew through her braids.

One end of the large chamber was occupied by the girls, a rough partition stretched across the other side of the stair; there were two beds, with patchwork quilts as below, a large chest in which their best clothes were kept, when they were not lying about the room, as was most frequently the case; some chairs, and an unpainted bench, or footstool. Clara sought in vain for a washstand or towels, but concluded not to ask at present, though greatly disappointed; fortunately she did not need a glass to arrange her hair, for Margaret placed herself before the little red-framed mirror, not larger than a good-sized window pane, and filled up the pauses by admiring glances.

"What makes you do your hair over?" was her first question. "You won't see any body if you live here a hundred years."

"See any body?"

"Yes, nobody ever cums here; but then there's nobody to come; *Miss* Sheridan, she lives nearest, but she's so stuck up—I'm glad she don't."

"Is Miss Sheridan a young lady?" inquired Clara, as hope of possible companionship flitted across her mind. "Has she finished going to school?"

"Why I should think so, when she's married and got two children."

"Married? why then she's *Mrs.*, not *Miss*," said Clara, rather decidedly.

Margaret looked offended; she was so accustomed to manage Eliza and the boys, or to attempt it, that she had an ever-present feeling of superiority. To have a little girl two years younger than herself—Margaret always insisted on her rights as the oldest,—attempt to correct her, was rather more than she could submit to amiably.

Clara instinctively felt that she had offended, and made the next overture herself.

"Didn't you ask me why I was taking my braids down? Well, I always feel better when my hair's smooth, don't you? Mother used to say that when she felt very tired, it rested her so to bathe and brush her hair out."

"Well you won't see any body," repeated Margaret, who could not possibly understand that all this trouble was taken for comfort and self-respect. It pleased her to think Clara still expected there would be visitors, and was

going to be disappointed, "setting herself up so, and telling *me* what I ought to say," was her ill-natured thought.

"I should do it all the same, if I *never* saw any body," retorted Clara, warmly. "I always feel so mean when I'm not tidy."

She was afraid Margaret would be offended again, the moment she had spoken, for she considered her cousin's dress very much disordered. It was a gay chintz or calico, as she called it, with pantalettes of another pattern, but the same material. She wore no apron, considering herself too old; a large collar, that had been her mother's, was put on "one-sided," and fastened by a bright red bow in front. Her hair was twisted up behind; also, to appear womanly, with a high, old-fashioned shell comb, which rose up above her head, and gave her a most comical look in Clara's eyes. It was, however, her chief pride and ornament; several rings were conspicuous on her hands, and she wore a string of large gold beads around her neck; but the comb made her look at least two inches taller, and was therefore especially cherished. It made no particular difference to her whether her hair was smooth or not, so long as the comb was put in.

"I've got most all of mother's things," she

said, thinking that Clara looked with envious eyes on this wonderful relic. "Eliza don't care for any thing but boy's play, and father gave them to me 'cause I teased him so. Father don't like to be teased; and when I want any thing real *bad*, I set to, and then he gives in."

This graphic description was the literal truth, and Clara soon found that "Honor thy father and mother" was no rule to her cousins. Her own dear mother had ever exacted the strictest respect and obedience, though kind and considerate in every thing. She would as soon have thought of open rebellion, as trying to change her mother's determination about any thing.

"Have you got any thing of Aunt Margaret's?" she continued.

The little girl's thoughts flew back to the present, and her beloved trunk still exposed to theft and robbery on the wharf. She had expected to see it arrive every moment; at first thinking, of course, that Mr. Bowen had mentioned such an important matter as that immediately. But Mr. Bowen had entirely forgotten it; and when Margaret asked the question, the Reliance was moving off down the stream, much to the joy of her passengers, and the trunk was still left to its fate, on top of the bank.

Margaret, anxious to see what it contained, undertook to wake up her father and have it attended to at once; and he scarcely began to understand the matter, when Eliza made her appearance, followed by Bel, in addition to the boys, in search of some paper to make a tail to the kite they were all employed in constructing. Her appearance at the dinner-table was further improved by smears of flour paste on her hands and clothes; she had lost one hair ribbon, and her yellow locks had received their share, as she repeatedly brushed them out of her eyes.

"You shan't have a single newspaper," said Margaret, laying her arm over the whole pile on the table, so as to secure them. "Henry said he'd take any body's head off that touched 'em."

It was neither zeal for Henry's possessions nor regard for the safety of their heads, which prompted Margaret; but an ever-present desire to control and thwart the others in whatever they desired to do.

"La, who cares! I know where there's a lot of real stiff writing paper,—tails ought to be stiff and heavy,—come on, Al'; who cares?"

Eliza was already searching in the same drawer from which so many articles had already been taken. The table-cloth was not there now;

Lecta had found a new place for it, on one end of the mantel-shelf.

"You'd better not touch any of Henry's things," said Margaret, warningly, as Eliza drew forth some stiff yellow papers, covered with writing, in a large bold hand.

"'Taint his—it's always been here—it's as old as the hills, and I'm tired of moving it round, when I want to put my things away. If Henry hain't been an' put his tools right onto my pop-corn and smelling-bottle!" which last was a small vinaigrette, still strongly scented with the otto of roses it had once contained, and was one of Eliza's great treasures.

"Come on, now," shouted George, who in age came between the two sisters, and sometimes played with, and sometimes tyrannized over, the younger children. "There won't be any wind to sail her with, if you don't hurry. Never mind putting 'em back."

"Here's de string, Marster George," said Bel, catching up a ball of twine among the things Eliza had scattered over the floor in her hurry, and had not the least intention of replacing.

"That's Henry's; don't give it to him, Bel—do you hear?—I say, Bel—"

But Bel was already half way across the

yard, out of reach, and almost out of hearing.

"Shall I put them up for you?" asked Clara, stooping to the wonderful collection of nails, door-knobs, pens, towels, spools, carpenters' tools, books, strings, corn cobs, patches, bees'-wax, and many other things too numerous to be catalogued.

"La, no;" Margaret gave a careless shrug of her shoulders; "Lecta 'll put 'em somewhere when she comes in to get supper. I guess father's goin' to send for your trunk; I see Joe's hitchin' up. Come, don't you want to ride down to the landing?"

"What! on the cart? No, I do not," said Clara, astonished at the proposal. "Do you ride on carts?"

"Why, what difference does it make?" said Margaret, in her old tone. "So I get a ride, I don't care—whether it's a cart, or a gig, or a horse and buggy. Henry's got a buggy of his own, but he never takes us any where. He's as odd as a stick, Lecta says. Come."

But Clara, unaware that the Reliance had departed, steadily declined the risk of encountering Julia and Augustus in such a forlorn equipage as the muddy cart; and her cheeks burned with a sudden blush, as she thought

of the possibility of their seeing Margaret. "They'd see my trunk go, and know who it was! Oh dear, I should be so ashamed! I wonder if they really are my relations;" but, at the same time, she knew that they were, and that her lot was cast among them.

CHAPTER IV.

GETTING SETTLED.

"Oh don't!" was Clara's first exclamation the next morning. She was scarcely awake, but looking around with her sleepy, half-shut eyes, and wondering where she was, expecting every moment to feel the jar of the boat, or hear the bell ring for breakfast, she discovered her cousin Eliza tugging away most vigorously at the tangles of her long hair, with the comb Clara had injudiciously left on the window-ledge the afternoon before. The unusual bandoline, of the paste so freely applied in making the kite, increased the difficulties of Eliza's undertaking, and threatened the slender, well-finished dressing comb.

"Don't?—I ain't going to break it."

"But it's mine, I guess you didn't see," urged Clara.

"Why, yes I did,—I guess I know the difference; but I can't stop to hunt mine up, when this one's so handy. Mag's got the brush."

Poor Clara!—there sat Margaret on the side of the other bed, quietly using the neat little brush, with its rosewood handle, and both were entirely unconscious of the greatness of the offence in Clara's eyes.

"You're dreadfully afraid of your things, seems to me," remarked Margaret, as she finished the operation, and threw the property in question across the room to its rightful owner.

"I never heard of using anybody's brush and comb—"

"Oh, just hear her, Mag,—where was you raised?"

Clara, really offended, declined to reply; she could not understand such utter ignorance of what she had been taught to consider indispensable, and thought they had agreed to teaze her. She was left alone to make her own toilet, her cousins spending very little time on theirs. Margaret did not even take her hair down,—"brushing it over" was considered sufficient until after breakfast; and as it often happened, not being done at the proper time, it was forgotten afterwards, sometimes for the whole day, which explained to her cousin the principal reason of her usually untidy appearance.

Clara, on the contrary, proceeded to dress herself as neatly as if she had been going to

encounter a room full of strangers. She found the night before that the girls made their ablutions below stairs, except on the grand Saturday's bath; a time-honored custom they still adhered to, when Electra brought one of the small tubs to their room. Clara had conceived the bold plan of asking her for a basin and towel, to keep in her own possession, and sallied forth to put it in execution. At the foot of the stairs a side door opened directly on to the ground, and she soon found her way to the kitchen. It was barricaded by tubs and pails, chickens, turkeys, which Clara feared as much as the dogs on the premises,—pigs, looking up their breakfast, and three or four negro children with their dirty little faces, knotty hair, and sharp, bright eyes.

Making a wide circuit to avoid the thickest of the crowd, as well as the mud which never appeared to dry in this particular place, Clara ventured to mount the sill of the ever open door, and reconnoitre.

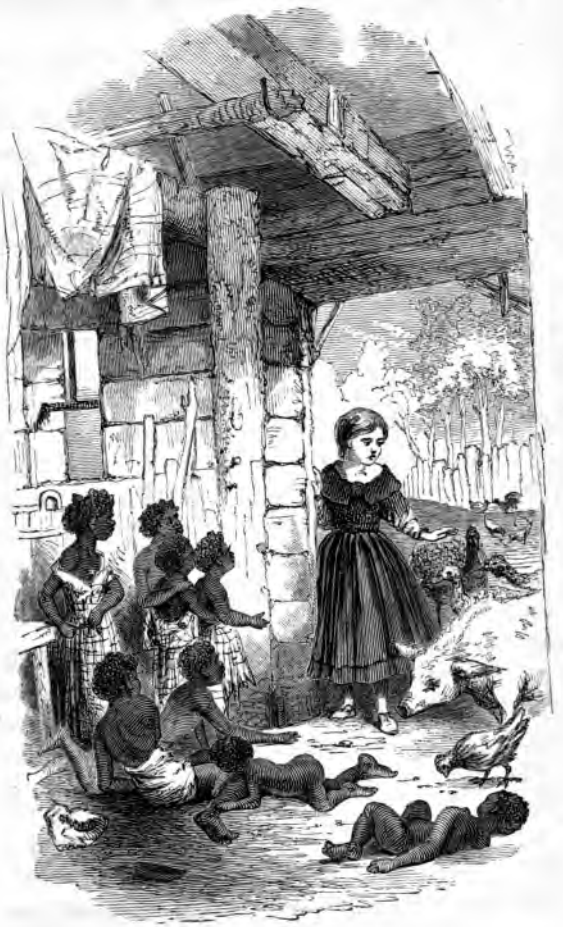
It was a very different place from any "kitchen" she had ever seen before. More children were tumbling about in the bed, which occupied one corner,—the rafters were strung with every conceivable description of property; and hugging a ragged blue coverlid closely

around her shoulders, an old negro woman, with withered hands and wrinkled face, sat by the huge fire-place smoking a short black pipe. This was old Rachel, who did not at first see her, but went on rocking back and forth, muttering to herself.

Pots and kettles, of every size and description, were hanging over the wood fire, by crooked iron hooks, or simmering on a bed of coals, and ashes drawn out to the hearth. The table was heaped with unwashed dishes and cooking utensils. Electra made it a rule never to wash any thing until it was needed. A crash towel and a tub of water stood in the midst, where she from time to time selected and cleansed the articles required in getting breakfast.

Just then she was overseeing Bel, who was under instructions for setting the table; and as Clara came to the conclusion that she was nowhere among her confused goods and chattels, old Rachel spied the child, and beckoned her in, with lively demonstrations of delight at seeing her,—her head trembling, and hands shaking as she tried to rise from her low seat by the fire.

"Come in, honey, come in—don't be skeard chile—it's only me—an' I'se held your dead and gone far'er Marster Jim, when he wusn't no



size. 'Pears like I'se jest lived to see his chile. Bress de good Lord for dat. De Lord he knows I'se a'ready to go; I'se an ole curmberer de groun dis ten years—since Mistris died, any way. I was mighty sot up wid Marster Jim, an' Mistris arter him, but it's 'pinted who's to go, and who's lef'. I'se here dis day an' dey's gone to Cannan."

The old woman lifted up her hands in trembling eagerness, while the frightened Clara could neither advance nor retreat, at the unexpected sight and address. The picaninies gathered around her in a ring on the door-step, and the two in the bed stopped their gambols with the uncovered bolster, and stared in mute astonishment, with their round eyes and mouths equally wide open. Electra's good-natured face seemed like a ray of sunshine as she brushed unceremoniously past, and began scattering the crowd of poultry, pigs and children, right and left.

"Clar out—clar out—ef you don't wanto git mor'n ye cum far! Cum to see ole Rachel? hey, honey?—she ain't so very well dis yer mornin'."

Clara chokingly promised to pay her father's nurse another visit, and tried to explain her errand. Her uncle's housekeeper was slow to comprehend it.

"Wash, hey?—laws, I wouldn't mind if they *was* 'round; Miss Liza don't, nor none of our folks, but they wan't raised to the North. You're jest like Mistris for all the world; 'pears like you'd oughto ha' been her chile. Tha ain't no other bowl, though." And with all her desire to serve the new comer, to whom she had taken a special fancy, Lecta was obliged to consider a moment, before she could promise to do so. Clara had scarcely gained her room, before Bel made her appearance at the head of the stairs with a large earthen cake or bread pan, and a dark blue pitcher of rain water. The towel had been forgotten, but Clara had one in her travelling-bag—her mother's way again—and she felt very much more comfortable when she had used her novel toilet set.

The day proved as warm and sunny as the one of her arrival, and Clara was much inclined to ramble off into the beautiful wood on the other side of the road. But her trunk had been carried up to the chamber, and she would not allow herself to put off the arrangement of its contents. Margaret, very anxious to behold them, urged her to unpack, and she was glad to find Eliza was going off with the boys, to try the kite they had manufactured the day

before. It was bad enough to have Margaret watching her, and remarking on every thing; but she felt that her patience would not stand the test of seeing Eliza pull about her treasures.

It was a very large travelling trunk of russet leather, and had belonged to Clara's mother. Margaret had never seen any thing like it. The pretty red morocco portfolio, attached to the top as it was opened—the upper tray with the neat compartment and lid at one end—the under trays, with their lattice-work of broad blue and white tape, which kept the different articles so securely, were great wonders to her. Clara enjoyed her evident astonishment, and her self-importance rose at once, as she displayed the contents to her cousin's envious eyes.

"What's in that part that snaps in with those little brass bolts," said Margaret.

"Oh, my underclothes; Mrs. Jacobs, I staid with her after—after I went away from the boarding-house; she packed them for me."

"All that full? why, how many have you got?"

Nothing loth, the little brass bolts were slid back, and Clara began counting them down. "There's six of every thing—mother cut them all herself—but I sewed on them, and said that was plenty, as I outgrew my clothes so fast.

She used to work them nicely, before, when she was well enough, and she began to do these; but she said this little plain linen lace must do for the rest. I have got it to put on yet; that's it in the corner. It's not very nice, is it?" she added in a tone of apology as Margaret made no comments. "What do you put on yours?"

"I never sew," said Margaret, quite grandly. She was a little disturbed at seeing these neat white under-garments, when her own stock was so decidedly shabby by comparison; and it pleased her to be able to show her superiority to any kind of work. "*We* never have to touch a thing for ourselves, Eliza and I."

"Don't you!—oh dear; well, I don't know whether it could be nice or not. I used to think so, when mother was teaching me. I used to cry over fells particularly—I do hate to fell. Mother said it would be easier to do it all herself, than to teach me."

"Why didn't she do it, then?"

"Because—"

"Because what?" asked Margaret, shortly, as Clara made a pause, and patted the nice cotton and flannel petticoats lying in a pile before her.

"Oh, because she said I should have to do

it for myself some day, and it would not be kind to me not to teach me. She said any woman ought to know how to do things for herself, all kinds of sewing, even if she was not obliged to, for sometimes they would find it a great comfort to be able to keep busy, when they were in trouble, or any thing—"

"But I never shall have to do any thing for myself, and I never mean to," returned Margaret, decidedly.

"Who does make your things?"

"Sometimes Mary Jane, and sometimes Adeline. I like to have Adeline, because I can make her do just as I say. Father let Mary Jane go to Shermansville, and hire out to a dressmaker, and she's had such high ways ever since. Adeline's Joe's sister, Aunt Rachel's girl, and they were always round the house before mother died. She used to make them sew when they were little bits of things."

Clara looked at the straight, ill-fitting dress which Margaret wore, and did not have a very high opinion of the taste or style Mary Jane had cultivated in Shermansville, nor of Adeline's neatness as a seamstress, judging from her cousin's night dress, which was lying on the floor close beside her. It was an almost shapeless garment, of stout, unbleached cloth;

the seams wide and untrimmed, and the stitches gaping like so many teeth.

"Well, I like to sew if I don't have too much of it to do," she said slowly; "and I love fancy work, don't you? Don't you ever do any fancy work? What do you do all day? Who hears your lessons?"

"We don't have any to hear."

Clara looked the astonishment and dismay she really felt; but her face brightened as she thought her cousins might have vacation just then. But no, her questions brought out this shocking state of things—shocking to Clara, who had lived all her life among books, and people who prized education above every other worldly advantage. Mrs. Sherman had taught the girls to read and spell before her death; the boys went to school at Shermansville, when ever they felt like it, which was not very often; and Henry, who had been sent away to his mother's relatives when a boy, and passed three studious years at a good school, had made various attempts at instructing his sisters. Their ignorance and obstinacy had disheartened him, and it was now more than a year since they had been left entirely to themselves.

"We didn't mean to mind Henry!—I guess

not," said Margaret, as she finished her explanation. "I hate the sight of a book."

"I think it was very good in Henry, when he seems to have so much to do."

"Good!" it was a new view of the question to Margaret. She had never once thought that Henry was acting from any disinterested motive; indeed, she could not understand it now.

"He tried to get father to say we should learn our lessons; but father doesn't care, and we teased so, he had to give that up."

"But what *do* you do with yourselves all day?" asked Clara, equally unable to comprehend such an entire Liberty Hall.

"Oh, any thing! 'Liza is always off after the boys, now. We used to play dolls together. Do you like to play dolls?"

"Dolls!" the contempt which Miss Clara Sherman managed to throw into the word. "No, indeed; I haven't dressed a doll these two years." She wondered at such a suggestion from a person so tall and old as Margaret; and her cousin had made it in a hesitating way, as if she felt she was compromising her dignity as the eldest. But the truth must be confessed. Margaret, tall as she was, and thirteen years old, was still as fond of them as ever. She had nothing else to fill up her empty mind and

heart; for she could not be eating all the time, though she always had a private hoard of eatables, and was constantly about the kitchen, helping herself, with a cup and spoon, to any culinary preparation she fancied. You never saw Margaret when she had not at least an apple or a handful of ground nuts in her pocket, to be drawn forth the first moment she was alone, for greediness is always selfish. So it is, that when we will not be at the trouble to cultivate virtues, vices spring up of themselves and overrun the ground.

"Are all these books yours? Why, you've got as many as Henry." Clara had arrived at the bottom of the trunk, which was occupied by a portfolio with a lock and key, a work-box, and some books.

"Oh, these are only my school-books; I brought those along, because I thought I should want them right away. My story-books are all in the great box at Mrs. Peters, in Pittsburg, with father's and mother's."

"What's this for?" and Margaret tried to open the portfolio.

"It's locked, because I have mother's letters in there. She wrote me five, when I went to Medford to make a visit once, and father wrote one. I always keep them there. Hasn't Henry

got a portfolio? What does he write his letters on?"

"An atlas; and he's always scolding because we get at it, and take his writing-paper. Henry's awful; you'll see how you'll catch it some day, just as we do."

The reserve of her eldest cousin had already intimidated Clara; and this description of him made her resolve to keep as much out of his way as possible; but still she could not help thinking that he was more like the people she had been accustomed to see all her life, than any of the rest of his family. He had a fine face, and erect figure, without being really handsome; and Clara was sorry to find that he had such a very bad temper.

"You haven't showed me your collars and ribbons," said Margaret, when she had separately examined the books and laid them down again. "Have you got any rings, or a chain? I'm going to have a watch and chain; I mean to make father send to Louisville for it, the very next time Henry goes."

No, Clara's stock of trinkets was very slender. A gold pencil and brooch, that had been her mother's; the brooch with plain gold and black rim, containing her father's hair; and a locket, the most cherished of all she possessed,

for it enclosed a tiny daguerreotype of her mother.

"Aunt Margaret wasn't handsome, was she? This is real homely, I think," said her namesake, in her usual blunt way, not thinking of or caring for Clara's feelings.

The tears sprang into the child's eyes. "Give it back to me—I'm sorry I let you see it;" and she slipped the ribbon and all into the neck of her dress. To her only child, at least, Mrs. Sherman's face was beautiful, though Margaret might not discover any trace of it; it was the beauty of thought and of gentle goodness which she could not appreciate. If Mrs. Sherman could have looked forward to her daughter's lot being cast among these ill-taught, unregulated children, perverse, idle, and obstinate, as the ignorant always are, she would have trembled for her. It was hard enough, without knowing them, to leave her to the care of strangers; but she strove constantly, while they were together, to be faithful in her duty to the child, and leave an influence and example she might carry with her through life. She went out into the world, shielded by more than a wise training and example,—a dying mother's earnest and unceasing prayers. So far the answer seemed withheld. She was shielded

from bodily want, it is true, but mind and heart would surely be dwarfed and stunted in this barren place, and exposed to such constant contact with ill-breeding and ignorance. Certainly it was the last thing Mrs. Sherman would herself have chosen for the child; for, if she had erred at all towards Clara, it had been in keeping her too carefully secluded.

"But where am I going to keep my things?" said Clara in dismay, looking at her empty trunk, piles of clothes, and books strewn over the floor; and then around the room, where no signs of closet, wardrobe, or drawer were visible. "Don't you have any bureau here, ever?"

"No," said Margaret, a little ashamed to confess to the absence of any thing her cousin considered indispensable.

"Nor washstand nor any thing?" Clara added, rather fretfully. "Oh, dear, what am I going to do?"

"You can't put any thing in there," said Margaret, looking towards the chest on which stood Clara's yellow bowl and blue pitcher; "it's as full as it can hold. I never can find a thing when I want it."

Clara was by no means anxious for a share of the chest. The idea of crowding her dresses

and skirts into the general receptacle, was not pleasant. It was going to be a great deal of trouble to go to her trunk, and perhaps lift out one or two of the trays every time she wanted any thing. Besides, to use her own expression, "it was running over full," and her dresses would be creased and rumpled. She saw no help for it, at the present, and commenced replacing her things in the order they had been packed. This was slow work. The sun beat down on the unshaded roof, and made the low attic uncomfortably warm; she was tired with lifting the things out, and had not the skill to replace them neatly in the small space allowed to each article by the experienced Mrs. Peters, and Margaret's suggestions were rather a hindrance than a help. Dinner time arrived, in the midst of her toils, and it was not until the middle of the afternoon that she was able to arrange her trunk to her satisfaction, which she finally accomplished by leaving out the books and work-box altogether, though sadly afraid of Eliza's meddlesome fingers. Her underclothes were neatly arranged in the upper part of the trunk, by themselves; her stockings nicely rolled up; her handkerchiefs, gloves, pantalettes, and the white cambric ruffles she wore in the neck of her dress, were in the

covered tray, where they would not be tumbled; and her dresses, shawl, mantle, and the rest of her little possessions, were carefully disposed of below.

Margaret had watched her for some time, calling her very foolish for taking so much trouble to fold things exactly, and lay them in order; and finally, being offended at Clara's total indifference to her suggestions and offers of assistance, she had betaken herself to an afternoon nap, another of Margaret's methods of disposing of her time.

It had taken a great deal of perseverance on Clara's part to finish her task, and the bed looked very inviting, tired and heated as she was; but she felt more than repaid by the feeling that she had arranged her trunk thoroughly, and resolved to keep it in the same excellent order, always, or until some benevolent person would persuade her uncle to allow them some drawers and a closet.

CHAPTER V.

NEW FACES.

More than two years before, Clara had complained one morning of her numerous hardships in being obliged to work and study so steadily. Her birth-day came soon after, and Mrs. Sherman gave her daughter Miss Leslie's Atlantic Tales, especially desiring her to read "The Week of Idleness." Clara was deeply fascinated by the whole history of the adventures of Josephine and Rosalind, in their endeavors to do nothing but amuse themselves; and secretly thought the time should not have hung so heavily upon her hands, if she had been allowed a whole week to herself. Now she had an opportunity to try it. No one laid any restraint upon her; there were no study hours, no stints of sewing, no histories to read, no furniture to dust. She could loiter about the whole morning without hearing, "My daughter, are your lessons learned for to-morrow?"

"Have you put your room in order?" and, when the end of the week came, no one to remind her of the few stitches of repair her clothes might need.

She did find it much pleasanter at first, than Miss Leslie's young people, for her liberty was more entire, her surroundings new, and the country very lovely. It was sufficient enjoyment and pleasure to wander under those fine old trees, listening to the full-voiced birds that haunted them, with an ever-varying, ever-cheerful song. To follow the brooks by their grassy margins, and come unexpectedly upon a tiny waterfall, with its dash and foam, and circling eddies, around moss-grown logs that had fallen across the stream, or dark rocks which divided the waters. The cool hollows, filled with delicate ferns and water-grasses, just springing up green and tall, were very beautiful. She gathered countless flowers, the very names of which were unknown to her; buds and opening blossoms, which a week of unclouded sunshine had called forth, and arranged them in wreaths with the vivid green foliage of the undergrowth, or filled the tumblers she had begged from Electra, to stand on the window ledge. She liked to see them when she woke early in the morning, or sat on the floor, with her feet gathered under her, in

the twilight. This she often did, watching the sunset fade into the quiet evening tints; the stars come out, one by one, and then, turning suddenly, finding herself alone, and the room filled with dark shadows, she would sob and cry pitifully, with a sudden sense of her mother's absence and her own lonely future.

Poor child! these thoughts came more and more frequently after the first novelty had gone, and her mind unoccupied was left to grieve over the past. Steady employment would have been a great blessing to her, and she began to believe this, as her mother had told her, after a time.

Eliza and Margaret seemed to be very happy, in their way, without it; but it was different with them. They could not understand their cousin at all, and often laughed at her and called her "a queer thing"—Nor did Clara always keep her temper. A hot, angry flush rose to her face, at the least word or look of ridicule; it was very hard for one so sensitive. She began to grow frightened at herself, and to fear that it would end in her being as rude and quarrelsome, as they were.

She had broken away from some such teasing one afternoon, the second week after her arrival, and bonnet in hand started for the wood

to indulge herself in feeling as miserable as she chose; when near the stile, she encountered her cousin Henry. He started quite as much as she did, but moved by some sudden impulse he did not avoid her as usual. Clara had seen very little of him, not enough to remove her first awe. His room was in the upper part of a carriage house, one of the numerous outbuildings,—and here he sat and read, or wrote by himself when not employed about the farm, or in his workshop, where he amused himself in bad weather, having quite a genius for mechanics.

"I'm going down to Sheridan's, in the buggy—should you like to go too?" he said with quite an effort to be gracious.

"To the Landing?" asked Clara, rather more surprised than pleased. She was so much afraid, that the idea of a drive alone with him, was not pleasant,—but she felt grateful for being asked, particularly as she remembered Margaret's remark, the day of her arrival—"Henry never takes us anywhere."

"No, to the Furnace, it's a very pretty ride—"

"I haven't any mantle, or cape," said Clara hesitatingly.

"Oh you can run to the house and get one, if you want it. It's very warm though."

"I think he does want me to go—" the little girl said to herself, and making a great effort to overcome her diffidence, she went back for her mantle, without which her sense of propriety would not suffer her to make an extended out-of-door excursion. Besides the hope sprang up in her mind at once, that she should meet Mrs. Sheridan, or some of her family, for she had a fancy they must be like the people she had always known before.

Margaret was stretched at full length upon her bed with a newspaper put over her face to shield the glare from the uncurtained windows. She lay so still, that Clara thought she was sound asleep; and this she was glad of, for she did not care to be questioned about where she was going; but when she rose from her knees by the side of her trunk, she found Margaret's sharp eyes watching her movements.

"What do you want that for?" she asked as she saw the light mantle on Clara's arm.

"I'm going out,"—it was an evasive answer, which did not satisfy her questioner.

"You ain't going to wear that into the woods, you needn't tell me?"

"Well I'm going with Henry then—" said Clara, satisfied that Margaret should know what unexpected honor she had arrived at, since she *would* ask questions.

Her cousin sprang up from the bed in astonishment; he had never in all his life asked Eliza or herself to go any where with him. "It was too mean, and she meant to go along—"

This was Margaret's rapid conclusion, and she arrived at the barn almost as soon as Clara herself, who drew a step or two nearer Henry when she saw her coming.

"I'm going too,—come now—" she called out boldly to her brother, who looked vexed and displeased.

"There's no room for you—" he said so crossly that it carried out Margaret's idea of bad temper.

"Oh yes, there is,—I won't crowd, and she shan't go a step if I don't."

Clara looked appealingly at Henry. She did not wish to offend Margaret, knowing her unkind, resentful disposition; and besides, the more she thought of it, the harder it seemed that her cousin should be left out of the little excursion. There was some self-denial in the decision, for Margaret looked more untidy than usual, from lying down, and she did feel ashamed of her.

"Well, jump in then—" said Henry, with much the same feeling as Clara's, with regard to Margaret's appearance, and knowing pretty

well that his sister would vent her disappointment in making her very uncomfortable if he refused. "I only hope we shall not meet any one,—haven't you any better bonnet than that? though it's more respectable than the thing trimmed with red ribbons."

Margaret's gingham sun bonnet of a pattern universal in that part of the country, was well enough in its way, if it had only been clean, but the pasteboard slips that stiffened it, were bent and broken, and the deep cape hung down long and limp, to her waist.

The little flutter of excitement with which Clara had looked forward to the ride was gone. She echoed Henry's wish of not meeting any one, and he had fallen into his usual silence. Margaret had most of the conversation to herself.

"What did you come for, then?" said Henry, at last tired of hearing her say, "how hot it was, and she was sure there was going to be a shower, and they should get wet through."

The drive itself was lovely. They drove down the road Clara had come with Mr. Bowen, though so rapidly borne along by Henry's fine horse, it seemed scarcely possible that it could be the landing, when they reached it. Clara gave a great sigh, as she caught sight

of the broad, smooth river, flashing in the sunshine. There was a boat far out in the middle of the stream, headed upward, and she wondered if it was not the "Reliance" on its return from Paducah; and thought how much she would like to see Julia and Mrs. Andrews again. The road grew broader here, and branched off in a different direction, no longer following the course of the river. The foundry was still at some distance, though they could see the smoke from its tall chimneys rising above the trees; and as they turned towards the West, Clara saw, besides the smoke, a dense black cloud, which spread so rapidly, that she began to share in Margaret's apprehension of a thunder shower. But Henry said nothing; and as he had silenced Margaret on the subject, Clara did not think it would be well to introduce it again.

There was quite a little village collected about the large sheds, or buildings in which the furnaces were, the cabins of the negroes employed in them, the cottages in which the overseers or foremen lived with their families; a small store of goods for their use, and such articles as would be needed about the establishment; and at a very little distance, a large house, painted cream-color, with white window

frames, and a portico, reaching to the broad window which marked the centre of the house in the second story. Clara thought it would be very pretty if the square, clumsy-looking portico had been extended into a piazza; however, it was a very fine house, and she had seen many in the same style as they came down the river. There was a pretty lawn, though unenclosed, and it was well shaded by a clump of well-grown forest trees.

"That's where Mrs. Sheridan lives," said Margaret, recollecting her cousin's correction, and avoiding any second blunder. "She came from Louisville, and she's so proud, nobody here's good enough for her. Henry can't bear her, can you, Henry?"

"It's nothing to you, one way or the other," Henry answered in the quick, sharp tone he always used when speaking to the children. It was not kind, and it always made Clara feel uncomfortable.

"Now don't go and start him off," he added, as he jumped out of the light vehicle, and fastened the horse near the main building, over one door of which "office" was painted in large white letters; "I shall get through as soon as possible."

"What's Henry come for?" asked Margaret,

as her brother disappeared through the office door.

"I don't know."

"Oh, yes, you do know, only you don't mean to tell," said Clara's questioner, resolved to see how far she had been taken into her brother's confidence; but becoming convinced by repeated denials, she declared that it was stupid work, sitting still, and she meant to go into the store and see what they had there. Clara begged her not to. Henry had given no such permission, and though she sat in fear and trembling lest "Pet," the beautiful chestnut horse, should start, and run away with her, she would not be persuaded to get out of the wagon. She watched him in the most shrinking dread, for some time, even the lightest movement of his ears, or tail, seemed indicative of the fatal spring; but after a while she grew more accustomed to the novelty of her position, and began to look around her. The large unpainted wooden buildings of the furnace, itself, were very uninviting; so was the space in front of them covered with heaps of reddish-looking earth and stones, which she found afterwards was the ore, out of which the black bars which the loading of the Reliance had made her familiar with as "pig iron," were melted. Great hills of refuse,

and of the bituminous coal which they burned, were cast up close to the buildings, and the negroes working about them seemed to her especially ugly and uninteresting.

She began to think that her ride was not going to turn out very pleasant after all; and that Henry was gone a very long time. She watched the curtainless window of the office in vain for any token of its occupants. It was no wonder; for the room was empty, and Henry, in another part of the establishment, with Mr. Sheridan, was transacting the business on which he had come. Margaret, too, must have found the store very interesting. She was tumbling over the piles of calicoes and mousselines de laine with very little scruple, and no opposition from the owner, who seldom saw a customer from off the place, and was amusing himself with her pert questions.

Meantime the cloud completely overspread the sky, and that peculiar sultriness and hush, which so often precedes a heavy shower, were very plain to the silent little watcher, perched up alone on the high carriage seat. Occupied with a long account, Henry had almost forgotten that he had left the girls unsheltered, until a distant but heavy roll of thunder, a sharp quiver of lightning, and the plash of large slow-

falling drops upon the stone-pavement before the door near which he stood, startled him into a sudden recollection of his position, and theirs.

Mr. Sheridan followed him, to discover the meaning of his sudden exclamation and abrupt start; and found Margaret standing by him, as he tried to quiet Clara's fears, that by this time had made her very pale, though she had neither screamed nor moved. Mr. Sheridan was struck with the white face and dilated eyes of the child, in contrast with her deep black dress.

"Oh! Mr. Sheridan!—whoa, Pet!—I am afraid I shall have to leave that account for another day. The shower is coming up very fast—I shall scarcely get home before the worst of it, now," said Henry, rapidly trying to unfasten his horse, who plunged forward as a second heavy burst of rattling thunder broke almost over them.

"You won't get half way—it will be driving down in five minutes. You must not think of starting," Mr. Sheridan said, with a kindly warmth of manner that made Clara turn towards him. He could not be "proud," as Margaret called it, if his wife was. Already he had put his arm around her, to lift her out. "Bring the little girls right into the office, or no—I will take

them up to the house, for it won't be over in a hurry."

"Thank you." Henry made the acknowledgment rather stiffly, Clara thought, and she wondered whether he would accept the invitation for them, as he looked up to the sky, and sought anxiously along the horizon for some break in the clouds; but there was very little encouragement to be found there.

"I think I had better try."

"But your vehicle is not covered, and these children will be drenched," urged Mr. Sheridan. "This one looks too delicate to risk it," and he set her quietly down by his side. "Bill, take Mr. Sherman's horse—I will be back in one minute;" and before Henry had time to urge any more objections, they were hurried up a short by-path leading to the house.

Clara could not make up her mind as to whether she was pleased or sorry. She had hoped to see Mrs. Sheridan, and but for Margaret's unwished-for presence, would have been disappointed when she found herself stationed so far from the house.

If Mrs. Sheridan was any thing like her husband, she was glad; and she stole another glance up at him, and met his merry smile with a look of great confidence and satisfaction. He

seemed as good-natured as Mr. Bowen, and much more frank; she could not always tell whether Mr. Bowen meant what he said, or was teasing her.

They were shown into a large room on the ground floor,—the dining-room, Clara thought, from the sideboard and numerous chairs. It was in perfect order, and the matting on the floor looked very cool and neat. Mr. Sheridan left them by themselves, while he went to tell his wife of the arrival of these unexpected guests; Clara not at all dismayed at the prospect, and Margaret sitting on the extreme edge of her chair, tipping her sun bonnet more over her face, and looking very foolish indeed.

Mrs. Sheridan, busied with the multitude of affairs which accumulate upon a mother and a housekeeper towards the close of the week, received her husband's intelligence with dismay.

"Oh, Charles! how could you bring them up here, when my hands are so full, I cannot possibly leave the nursery. I don't know what I shall do to entertain them! If they were any other children but those uncivilized little Shermans, I could give them some books or pictures. I don't believe they even know how to read."

"One of them does, you may depend upon it. She never got her intelligent face without reading. But it can't be helped; common charity would have offered a shelter, and I dare say we shall have to keep them to tea, if not all night; it's a tremendous rain, but we needed it;" and Mr. Sherman looked about for an umbrella to convey himself back to the office with.

His wife followed him down stairs, inwardly fretted by this inconvenient and to her very unwelcome arrival. She had encountered the little Shermans several times since she came to live at the Furnace, and remembered them as coarse, ill-bred children it would be uncomfortable to receive into her well-kept, orderly house.

CHAPTER VI.

THE SHERIDANS.

Clara was timid and shrinking, but she was too well taught for awkward bashfulness; besides, she had been thrown very much among strangers for one so young. Mrs. Sheridan was surprised into kindliness and warmth, as the shy little figure came so directly towards her, and offered her hand, as she came into the room. She did not see Margaret for a moment, and came to the conclusion that Mr. Sheridan had made some mistake.

"I expected to see some neighbors of ours," said she, kindly; "but your name is not Sherman, I am positive."

Clara wondered what made her so sure.

"Yes, ma'am, it is, and this is my cousin Margaret," she returned, by way of introduction. "We were caught in the shower."

Mrs. Sheridan turned towards Margaret's lovely face and figure; but she did not offer

her hand. A little shade of disappointment crossed her face.

"You will have to come up into the nursery, if you will not mind," she said, speaking again to Clara. "I am very busy this afternoon, and cannot very well leave the children. Do you like children, my dear?"

"Oh, very much," and Clara's eyes lightened with recollections of Dolly Dumpling's frolics. "Little babies—have you got a little baby?"

"Two," said Mrs. Sheridan, laughing a little; "this way," and she looked back for them to follow her, talking as they went up stairs. "Charlie would be a baby if he had no little sister, but you shall see them."

The hall at the head of the stairs was large and square, lighted by the bow window which opened upon the portico. It was covered with India matting, in red and white squares, and had a cane-seated sofa, some chairs, and a work-table; this was the chief sitting-room of the family. A venetian blind tempered the light and heat, and there were well-filled book-shelves against the walls.

Clara's heart gave a great bound; books, and a work-table, nicely kept, for one drawer stood open and displayed neatly-arranged

copartments for spools, buttons, etc.; Mrs. Sheridan must be after her own heart!

"I wish she would like me, and let me come and see her," she thought; "but she won't, oh dear!" and her heart sank again, as she turned to look where Margaret was, and saw her cousin's disordered hair and untidy dress. "What will she think?" and the child's face burned with a glow of shame for her relatives, as she would have done if Augustus and Julia had discovered that her uncle's house was only a log cabin.

"This is my nursery," said Mrs. Sheridan, throwing open the door of the room she had just quitted. It was over the dining-room, and appeared to be her own chamber, for there was a double bed, protected by mosquito bars, as well as a crib and wicker cradle. The two children were in a high frolic, the baby on the floor, where an old-fashioned blue and white counterpane had been spread for it, and watched over by a wrinkled but still active negro woman, who nodded to the little girls in the most friendly manner. "Maumer," for she had been Mrs. Sheridan's own nurse, and was still addressed by the kindly title, was delighted to see some new faces. She had lived all her life in the city, and found the Furnace "on-

common stupid, 'long them no count niggers." As she herself expressed it, she was "fond of s'ciety and glad to see 'em."

"Oh, isn't it a sweet little thing!" said Clara, as she caught sight of the five-months' old baby, kicking its white robe from its little plump, rosy feet, and carolling forth an unbounded burst of admiration to the rag-doll, Maumer's own manufacture, which she was dancing up and down before it.

Mister Charlie, careering around on a spirited walking-stick of his father's, paused in the farthest corner of the room, and eyed Clara defiantly, as she stooped down by the baby. It was *his* baby, mamma took care of it for him, but then it was all his own, and he resented its having any playmate but himself.

Margaret's disposition was naturally too selfish to be at the trouble of playing with or amusing children; she would have been entirely at a loss how to begin, if she had felt so disposed.

"Have you any little brothers or sisters?" asked Mrs. Sheridan, more and more pleased with Clara, and wondering how the cousins came to be so entirely unlike.

"I had a little brother once, a great while ago, but I loved him dearly."

"Then you are an only child. I dare say your father and mother are the more fond of you?"

The involuntary drooping of the upraised eyes, and quiver of the child's mouth, made Mrs. Sheridan regret what she had said, instantly. She understood from it, that one or both parents had been taken away, as well as the little brother.

"Come here, Charlie, and see these young ladies," she said, to divert Clara's attention. She forced herself to include Margaret, who had dropped upon a chair, feeling very uncomfortable and out of place, already resenting the notice Mrs. Sheridan took of her cousin.

"Won't you come and see me, Charlie?" Clara said, in the simple, unaffected way, that was so remarkable in her. "I know some nice little stories."

Charlie, intrenched behind his mother's sewing chair, and for the last few minutes occupied in making faces at Margaret, surveyed her irresolutely.

"Do you know about 'Charlie, boy?' 'Where is my little basket gone?' Does he know that story, Mrs. Sheridan?"

"I don't think he does," said Charlie's mamma; "go to the little girl; what is your

name, my dear? go to Clara, Charlie, and hear about it."

Being stimulated by curiosity, Master Charlie suffered himself to capitulate, and finally ventured quite within range of Clara's capturing hand; who was soon repeating her store of remembered nursery rhymes, with Maumer as well as her oldest charge, for delightful listeners.

Meantime the violence of the storm increased. Gusts of wind drove up the dust in clouds, and bent and swayed the trees before the window, as if it had power to snap them at their roots. The shutters torn from their fastenings, crashed against the house, and then came a heavy down-pouring rain, that almost hid the Furnace, and made pools and water-courses in the road between it and the house. Mrs. Sheridan continued quietly sewing, and the children played on undisturbed at first, until not even Clara's recitals could divert Maumer's fears any longer. A loud exclamation from her, and a scream of terror from Margaret, burst forth at once, at a vivid flash of lightning that quivered through the room, followed instantaneously by a long resounding roll of thunder, that seemed to jar the whole house.

"Oh, oh!" screamed Margaret, covering her face, and cowering down as if to escape it.

"I 'm sure it struck. Oh dear, we shall all be killed."

"There is no danger, I think," said Mrs. Sheridan quietly, vexed at Maumer's outburst, which had accomplished what the thunder could not, and started the baby into a loud cry. "The house has a lightning rod."

Clara went over and stood by Margaret directly, though it brought her immediately in front of a window. "Don't be afraid, I 'm not," she said, in a tone she might have used to hush one of the children. "I used to be sometimes, and I know how dreadful it is."

Mrs. Sheridan had been watching her. "You have got all over it then,—you are directly in front of the window," and she laid down her work, and walked towards it herself.

"Don't you like to see it come down, such great *columns* of rain?" said Clara, pausing a moment for a word.

"Very much; but I should like to know how you were cured of being frightened."

"Mamma explained about the electricity to me one day, and then she told me besides that all things were just as God wanted them, and He could take our life away if He chose it, just as easily when the sun shone as in a storm, or on the land as well as on the water."

"A great many people know that who are still great cowards," said Mrs. Sheridan, "though generally the more we know, the less groundless cowardice we have."

"Oh, I did not get brave right away, and mamma always thought me a coward; but she said I ought to *try* and get over it, because it would make me unhappy as long as I lived. So she told me *how* to try."

"How was it?"

"Different ways," said Clara, gravely. "One was, to stop and think whether there was anything to really be afraid of; and another way was to ask God to take the fear out of my heart. I do that sometimes. I did on the boat when Augustus Andrews told me one night about all kinds of dreadful accidents. I can't always do so though."

"Your mother was quite right; and you will find it a great comfort," said Mrs. Sheridan, struck with the child's simple faith, acting upon what she knew must be a naturally timid and shrinking nature. "Your cousin must try and remember it too. Won't you come and see how grand the storm is, Margaret?"

But Margaret was still exclaiming with terror, at every flash, having lost all self-control,—and Mrs. Sheridan saw this.

"We will go into the hall, when it is light enough to see with the blinds down, and that will shut out the worst of the glare. I must lay out the children's clothes first,—it is almost their bed-time, and I am afraid I shall forget it."

Clara noticed this in Mrs. Sheridan, because she had always seen it done at home, ever since she could remember. Clean night-dresses, and underclothes, were always laid out before bed-time on Saturday night, so as to prevent all hurry and confusion the next morning. Mrs. Sheridan accomplished it rapidly, and without seeming to have to stop to remember where any thing was. She hung clean towels over the little frame, which stood by the crib,—and Charlie's fresh suit, in the exact order in which it would be wanted, stockings last. The baby's were neatly piled in a large shallow basket, which Clara thought so pretty that she wanted to look at it, but did not like to ask. It was of wicker work, and covered with a muslin lining, over blue silk or cambric,—there were pockets on each side, and a great many little articles arranged neatly at one end. Two more piles of garments were laid on the large bed,—and then their hostess was ready to go with them. Charlie was carried off for his supper, "and don't

frighten him, with any foolish nonsense, Maumer—" said Mrs. Sheridan, "for you know I shall be very much displeased with any one who tells him the ridiculous things I used to hear when a child. You can bring the water for baby's bath when you come up.

"I have more than usual to attend to now, for the maid who waits on my room is sick," she explained to the little girls. "She has been taught just how I wish things, and it saves me a great deal of trouble."

"You do things just like mamma," said Clara involuntarily.

Mrs. Sheridan understood her well enough to see that it was the highest praise. "Do I? I dare say you often thought that she gave herself and you a great deal of unnecessary trouble; but when you notice it, there are a great many steps saved in the end. Would you like to hold the baby for me a moment, while I go and give Julia her medicine?"

It was not that she needed the little girl's assistance, but to provide her with amusement,—and she took down an illustrated book for Margaret before she left them; but Margaret cared no more about pictures than she did for the stories they belonged to.

"Didn't I tell you she was stuck up?" she

said rudely, almost before Mrs. Sheridan was out of hearing. "Giving you the baby to hold. Why didn't she call somebody—"

"Oh, I'm sure she was very good to let me take the dear little thing; hasn't it got lovely eyes? and not a bit afraid. Pretty birdie—pretty little birdie?" she chirruped to her little charge, who, as she said, did not seem in the least afraid, but smiled, and crowed in return.

"I wish we'd known we were coming, and I'd have dressed up," said Margaret, trying to find another unpleasant subject. "I wish it would stop raining. It's always the way, something always happens when I go any where."

"Well—I rather think I'm glad it did rain. I've had a real nice time, and if it hadn't been for the rain we shouldn't have seen Mrs. Sheridan, and these dear little children—"

"I think they're real little plagues,—the other one didn't do any thing but make faces at me."

"I wish she would let me come and see them again—" said Clara, well pleased with her share of their attentions.

"Oh, you needn't expect that!—she can't bear any of us, I know. I heard Henry say so once,—she must be as mad as a hornet to have us here this afternoon. I'm glad of it!" Mar-

garet added spitefully, and almost in hearing of Mrs. Sheridan, who reappeared at that instant, followed by a servant carrying the baby's tin bath-tub.

"I'm not going to wait for Maumer,—I find it is very near tea-time," she said; "spread the oil-cloth, and put the tub down here, Jane, by the door; I dare say you will like to see baby in her bath, I think children always look sweetest then. Charlie waits up to have a romp with his papa. The clouds are breaking away, I think; you will have a delightful ride home."

It was indeed a pretty sight, the baby's round dimpled limbs, shining in the cool water, and the child's evident delight, as she tried to catch her own little toes, and carry them to her mouth, or plashed about for the sponge, with little ineffectual attempts to balance herself, and lean forward at the same time. Mrs. Sheridan lifted her still dripping and rosy to the blanket laid in her lap, and Clara noticed how every thing she wanted was in the basket, without being at the trouble of sending for and collecting the different articles. The towel,—the soft knit shirt, the night robes, a tiny hair-brush, and a powder puff were all there. A string had slipped out of the little dress unnoticed, in looking over the clothes, it seemed,—and instead

of a fretted exclamation, and a great fuss to replace it,—Mrs. Sheridan took bobbin, scissors, and even a needle and thread, from one of the side pockets. It was done without laying the baby out of her lap, and just as the hall-door opened below, and Mr. Sheridan's voice was heard with Henry's as they entered the house together.

"Well; how have you managed?" he said to his wife, as he came up to make his evening toilet, and closed the door upon the little girls. He had stopped to speak to them, as he came through the hall.

"Pretty well, Clara's a nice child, a cousin of the other."

"Yes, young Sherman told me about her. I asked him. She's an orphan, and come to live with them."

"Poor child!"

"She'll be spoiled there, I'm afraid, though the young man has a great deal in him."

"I never could see it; he always seemed to me as rude as a bear, to speak within bounds."

"He is a little awkward I know, and reserved, so are you; excuse the compliment. I did not include the awkwardness in your case."

"You would not have thought so, if you had seen me talking to children."

"And if you will take the trouble to draw young Sherman out, you will find he has a great deal of good sense, and is well read, I think. I often feel sorry for him; there's no one for him to associate with any where about, except us, and I've never asked him here much, knowing your dislike to him. I really wish you would try and get over it—"

A bright affectionate glance made the promise her husband desired; and giving the baby a good-night kiss, her mother left her to Maumer's lullabies. Mr. Sheridan stopped in the hall to draw up the blind. The strength of the storm was spent, but the sky was still piled with heavy clouds, and rain fell in subdued, brief showers, every now and then.

"You will have time to take tea with us comfortably, before you can venture out, young ladies. Your brother is down stairs."

Margaret would have preferred going without tea all her life just then, to taking it at Mr. Sheridan's table. It was an ordeal she had been dreading ever since Mrs. Sheridan had said it was almost ready. She followed Clara with a slow heavy tread, and sullen face; which Henry did not fail to notice as she entered the dining room. He was ashamed of her any way, and the contrast with Clara, now that it was

forced upon him, made her defects still more apparent.

What Mrs. Sheridan called Henry Sherman's "bearishness" was a mixture of pride and reserve, which was visible whenever he was with those who did not take the trouble to understand him.

It melted in some degree before her pleasant greeting. She had tried to make it very cordial. With her husband he felt quite at home, and gradually suffered himself to talk, as Margaret had never before heard him, and as Clara had felt sure he could, if he only chose. She was inwardly delighted at the turn things had taken, and forgot herself in listening to them. Besides, there was the pleasure of finding herself seated at a neatly laid table once more; a castor in the centre—bread and biscuit, cold beef and ham, arranged in thin neat slices on the oval white dishes,—a basket of cake, and a well ordered tea-tray, covered with a clean napkin, were upon the table. The silver and glass were very handsome. Tea was served without any of that worry or blundering, which betrays that this is not the usual routine. Mrs. Sheridan's table, like Clara's hair, was always arranged as if it expected visitors, and consequently no change needed to be made on their arrival.

Only one servant waited, but she was so active and well trained that every one was helped almost without a word. Clara thought of Electra's familiar remarks and comments, of Rod and Bel, dodging each other and their mother's correcting hand,—of the children dripping gravy upon the cloth, and putting their own knives in the butter. Perhaps Henry thought of it too.

Margaret's untouched napkin laid beside her plate, and when spoken to, she answered in monosyllables. Clara took great comfort in hers. At her uncle's she had substituted a set of stout handkerchiefs, which she carried in her pocket to her meals. The very arrangement of this table gave her an appetite, and she felt happier than she had done since she left the Reliance. Poor Margaret was really to be pitied; the consciousness of her appearance, of her ignorance, and her perpetual dread of making blunders, which she constantly did,—made her very hot and uncomfortable. It was the first time in her whole life, that her self-esteem had been shaken, and every thing combined to make the lesson a hard one.

"I wonder if she will ask us to come again," was uppermost in Clara's thoughts, as she rose from the table, and she heard Mr. Sheridan

give the order to have Mr. Sherman's horse brought around. She could not help hoping for the invitation, though Margaret had warned her not to.

"It is clearing up finely," said Mr. Sheridan as they went out upon the portico. Pet stood neighing and tossing his silky mane at the door, still no word of what she so hoped to hear. "You will have a nice drive home, the air is so fresh, after the rain. It is just about far enough for a pleasant drive,—Mrs. Sheridan and myself are coming up to see you some evening—"

A glow of pleased surprise lighted up Henry's fine eyes. Mrs. Sheridan noticed it. "Yes, we will come very soon, and shall hope to see you here again, Mr. Sherman. You must bring—" "Clara" she was going to say, but corrected herself, and added, "these young ladies."

If Clara had been alone, she would have kissed her good-bye, but she could not make up her mind to include Margaret in *that* movement; but she held Clara's hand in hers a moment, and it was quite sufficient to confirm the friendship which had sprung up between them. When I say friendship, I mean mutual good-feeling and interest, not the silly intimacy which young people usually understand by it, and

which so often ends in a vigorous quarrel and entire separation.

There was little talking done on the ride home, but the thoughts of all three were very busy. Henry broke forth once, in admiration of the way little Charlie went to bed.

"Did you notice it, Clara, in the midst of that play with his father?—how contentedly he broke off and said good night? I should like to see one of our children mind that way, old as they are," he added.

"I don't suppose you did any better," retorted Margaret, who was, naturally enough, particularly cross.

"Yes, I did—mother—I always minded her, and it's a pity she hadn't lived to train you a little."

Clara felt distressed, as she always did at Henry's harshness to his brothers and sisters. Sometimes, when she thought she should like him very well indeed, such an altercation would spoil it all. It was so this evening, and though he lifted her out of the wagon carefully when they arrived at the farm, and said he hoped she had enjoyed herself, it did not quite make amends.

CHAPTER VII.

THE FIRST SUNDAY.

THERE was, of course, no field-work on Sunday, and the negroes, dressed in their best, were left entirely to themselves. Most of them set out very early for the Methodist meeting near the Furnace, to which they belonged. Electra was in a great hurry to have breakfast out of the way, that she might follow those who had no household tasks.

"You see I'se jined as a mourner," she said to Clara, "an' that's why I'se so pertikerlarly anxious."

"As a mourner?" repeated Clara, wonderingly.

"Yes, don't you know what that is? Well, I know, 'taint right to be wicked, and I don't want to stay so."

"No," said Clara, "it is not right for any body to stay wicked," and she looked very

thoughtful for a moment, wondering how Electra's plan would help a person to be better. The chance remark of the ignorant servant was the only thing Clara heard from any member of the family about church-going. She found that, as a general thing, no one but the servants went, but seeing Henry having his horse harnessed, and remembering his kindness of the night before, she crossed the yard, and asked him if he would take her, if he pleased.

She did not once think that he could drive any where but to church; and this very unconsciousness of his usual Sunday pursuits, was a louder reproof than any spoken words would have been.

"To church? why, yes. I'll take you if you want to go. I was not going myself though," he added, with his accustomed truthfulness, "but I will, if you want me to. You won't have much time to get ready."

"I'm ready now. I always dress for all day when I get up on Sunday morning; but—" She hesitated, wondering whether she ought to go when Henry would have to give up some other plan to take her. It was a tempting thought, sown in her heart by the evil influence which delights in withholding every one from a knowledge of their duty to their Heavenly

Father. Temptations to do wrong always come to us through our natural dispositions; to Clara they were almost always fears; to a person like Margaret, self-confident, they would have been over-boldness. If she had given up to her dislike of putting people out of their way, that morning, it might have influenced her whole future life for evil; at the very least, no good seed would have been sown in her own heart or her cousin's.

She was encouraged at the outset, after she had decided to go with Henry, by escaping unkind remarks or notice from the other children. They were still in the breakfast room, and she gained the chamber by the side door, and tied on her bonnet, and found her prayer-book undisturbed. She was going down the stairs again, when she recollected herself, and knelt for a moment by the bed-side to ask God to "give her Sunday thoughts." It was a childish prayer her mother had taught her years ago, when they had been talking about keeping the Sabbath holy; and she had never forgotten the conversation.

The wood was doubly beautiful after the rain of the night before; and when they came out upon the main road, and passed other farms, the air was full of the spicy breath of apple

blossoms in the young orchards, which were one sheet of pink and white.

"I wish they could all go," said Clara, who felt a little self-reproach at taking the only chance of attending church.

"You need not be troubled about that," Henry answered, amused at the idea. "No one else wants to."

"Don't *you* go?"

"Sometimes," he answered, evasively.

"What kind of a church is it? Papa's wasn't a handsome one. It was built for poor people. Is this handsome?"

"It isn't a church at all. It is only a schoolhouse, and the clergyman only comes half a day, every other Sunday. He hasn't a very large congregation."

"Then it's for poor people too. Are they all poor?"

"Not very. Mr. Sheridan always is there, and two or three gentlemen who live further still than the Furnace. There are a number of rich farmers around here, but people don't care much about such things; they are not brought up to, as you were."

"But every body ought to be, I think. Doesn't uncle George go?"

"No. never."

Clara was silent for a little while. Henry said this as if he did not wish to talk any more on the subject, and they were near Shermansville. She was much disappointed in the place, and concluded that the family were not so much honored after all, in having it named for them. There were two rival stores, a little shoemaker's shop, which was also the Post Office, a shabby tavern, or drinking place, where miserable looking men were hanging about, a building scarcely large enough for a doll's house, and principally covered by its owner's sign, "Andrew Sharp, Attorney at Law," and half a dozen small houses, scattered at intervals along the road, and a little cross street. They were mostly unpainted log houses, or board "shanties," and with very little external comfort or neatness. The school-house was an old building, also of logs, and now dilapidated. Clara's father had cut his name upon more than one tree in the grove around it, in his boyhood. Every one said there ought to be a new school-house and a first-rate teacher, as they had at Clarkesville and Seneca; but in the mean time they were all, like Mr. Sherman, too busy improving their farms, to care what became of their children. The rain soaked through the leaky roof in summer, and the cold and

smoke benumbed the scholars in winter, while a fifth-rate schoolmaster, with little learning and no discipline, allowed them to play truant without reproof, or to study or not, as they pleased, when there.

The scattered congregation had already assembled, and Henry fastened his horse under a tree, and led the way through a little crowd of other vehicles into the house. Some one made room on a bench for Clara, and she accepted the attention without knowing who it was, but to her great pleasure found herself standing beside Mrs. Sheridan, when they rose at the first chant, which was read by the clergyman and congregation, as there was no choir.

The pastor of this scattered flock was an earnest-minded, faithful man, who was satisfied to go out into the highways with his message. As yet there had been little to encourage him; it was a more absorbing worldliness than he had ever met with before, and those whose whole souls were given to "buying farms and proving oxen," still prayed him "to have them excused" from any higher Christian or social duties.

Still he was content to prepare the stony ground and sow the seed faithfully, even if another was sent to reap the harvest.

Clara's mind wandered sadly. Every thing

was so new and strange to her. Other children stared at her too, and she could not get accustomed to seeing the clergyman standing in the teacher's low desk, close to their bench, instead of a pulpit.

She was glad they had come, particularly when she noticed how grave and attentive Henry was, so unlike some of the other young men, who appeared to be there only from curiosity.

Mrs. Sheridan spoke to her after church, and their neat carriage led the way home, though they were some distance ahead of them.

"Is Mr. Sheridan the richest man any where about here?" asked Clara, noticing the great difference between his vehicle and the old-fashioned, inconvenient wagons of his neighbors.

"No," said Henry. "Father's the richest man I guess, but there are half a dozen as well off as Mr. Sheridan. He knows how to use his money though."

"Then Uncle George really is rich!" Clara felt relieved of certain doubts on that subject, still she could not understand why he lived in such a very shabby way; and she went on puzzling over it, until she suddenly recollected that *these* were not Sunday thoughts.

Mr. Sheridan was out of sight by this time, and the roll of their own wheels was the only sound to break the stillness, except when they encountered groups of gaily dressed negroes, some in carts, others on foot, who were ready with a good natural salutation, which Henry always returned.

"Doesn't it seem as if every thing *knew* it was Sunday!" said Clara, as they left the last farm behind, and entered the wood with its deep, grateful shadow.

"Dumb creatures,—do." Henry was thinking of the drinking and lounging he had seen in the village, and that his own time was passed no more profitably, if less wickedly, as a general thing. "I believe more people would go to church if we had one—a church building I mean."

"Perhaps they would—and a bell to call them, and every thing in order," said Clara. "I don't believe they would laugh and talk so much; I never saw it before; and I thought it was dreadful."

"People ought not to mind that, though that's what I've heard father say very often—only he said too, that when a house was built, and blessed, and kept for God's service, it was more natural that people should feel what the first text says."

"The first text?—Oh, the first text in the morning service?"

"Yes, 'The Lord is in His holy temple, let all the earth keep silence before Him.'"

"I never thought of that, exactly," said Henry, scattering the petals of the dogwood blossoms with his whip lash, as they rode along.

"Sunday always seems so still and heavenly in the country;" Clara returned to her first thought; "and I'm very much obliged to you for taking me."

But there was a sad contrast to the quiet loveliness of the woods and fields, as they drove up to the stile that Clara might get out of the carriage more easily. George and Eliza, in their usual week-day clothes, were disputing about something violently; while Margaret stood at a little distance helping the quarrel along, by her provoking speeches. The whole crowd of little woolly heads had gathered about them, and even Mr. Sherman, attracted by the noise, was slowly coming towards the group, with his hands thrust in his pockets, as usual.

Clara could not discover the cause of this disgraceful scene; for the brother and sister were using not only words, but blows, in their angry struggle for the possession of some plaything.

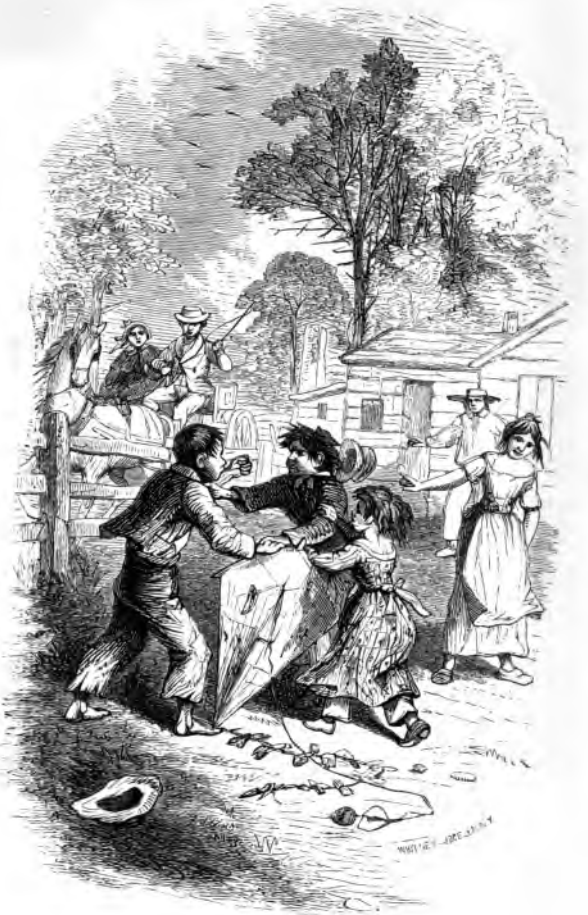
"I tell you it's mine!" shouted George, snatching at the article in question, and pushing Eliza rudely from him at the same moment; but she managed to keep her hold.

"No, it isn't—I helped as much as you did!"

With a hasty exclamation Henry sprang over the stile, into the midst of the group; his face was perfectly white with anger and mortification. Before they could defend themselves he had dealt a vigorous blow at George, which sent him reeling up against the barn, and shaken Eliza roughly by the shoulders.

"Quarrelling from morning till night—a disgrace to the whole neighborhood," he said fiercely. "I wish I could break it into a thousand pieces!" And he crushed the unfortunate kite with his strong hands, and threw as far as he could send it over the fence. Clara alone saw where it lodged against a pile of lumber, outside of the barn-yard; but it was entirely useless, as Henry meant it should be. The little negroes had scattered in all directions, lest their turn should come next, but he still stood there when Mr. Sherman reached the scene of the dispute.

"What's all this? what's all this?" he said, with a little more animation than usual. "Henry, hain't you hurt 'Liza?"



"I hope I have—I meant to," he said passionately. "I never saw such a disgraceful set of children in my life. It's a shame to the whole neighborhood! No wonder every body keeps away from here; I should think they would. I won't stay myself much longer if things go on in this way."

Mr. Sherman looked very uncomfortable at this outburst on Henry's part, but the whole case was beyond his help or jurisdiction. He had suffered his children to do as they pleased so long, that they had become angry brawlers, and idle Sabbath breakers, habitually; and when it was thus forced upon his notice, the evil was too deep for him to reach. He could only say, "Children, you musn't do so—'taint right;" but why it was not right, he had never taught them; nor had he any very clear ideas himself.

It is not a pleasant thing to draw such pictures as the daily life of the Sherman family, but I have been obliged to do so, that you may understand what unhappy influences surrounded Clara, so differently educated, and at first so resolved to do well.

Her great misfortune was, that she had no occupation. She began the very next day, on Monday morning, a good time to put new reso-

lutions in practice, to employ herself. She had quite a grand plan which she intended to pursue. She was to study three hours, and to sew one at least. She even had a benevolent scheme of teaching Electra's youngest children to read, remembering her mother's thoughtfulness for the poor, and her father's labors among them. The morning passed tolerably well. She looked over all her books, found the places at which they were laid aside, and marked some lessons for the next day. She took out the underclothes that were to be finished with the narrow lace, and laid them in a pile on top of her trunk. She did more than this, for she had in view nothing less than a general house-cleaning in their apartment, if Eliza and Margaret would only keep out of the way, as they kindly did; but which they would not have done, if they had supposed their absence particularly desirable.

For once in their lives, they agreed to go out together, to a favorite play-ground in the wood; and no sooner was Clara quite certain of this, than her reforms began. 'Bel was her delighted assistant, though she set about doing it all herself. It was Electra's suggestion that she should take her also, when she went to borrow a broom. Electra "never could see no

use'er sweepin' mor'n onc't a week;" but Clara could do as she pleased. As to teaching the children, she was evidently highly delighted by the proposal, though she made a faint attempt at dissuading Clara. "'Peared like it wa'n't much use."

Our little friend felt very self-satisfied, and very useful indeed, as she began sweeping and dusting; and then the brilliant idea crossed her mind of asking Henry for some nails to drive up and hang her dresses on. Henry had never been any thing but kind to her, and she was beginning to lose her first fear of him, but he was not to be found that morning, and she came back flushed and tired, to sit down and enjoy her labors. Really! the room looked very much improved, and she meant to keep it so, never mind what Margaret and Eliza said. But, as is often the case, she made her first backward step when she appeared to herself advancing so rapidly. Her dress was soiled, and her hair disarranged by these unusual exertions, and she went down to dinner in this state, feeling too tired to change. It was by no means the last day in which she followed the fashion of the house.

The lessons did not succeed very well; though she was in so much of a hurry to com-

mence them the next morning, that she omitted to read her morning chapter in her mother's Bible, and to place herself under her Heavenly Father's protection for the day. She thought it would answer quite as well to read before she went down to dinner, but Simeon, the "fancy" child, who was to be her first pupil, arrived according to her desire, at eleven o'clock, and she wearied herself with ineffectual attempts to persuade him into knowing A when he saw it.

After dinner Margaret and Eliza were both in the room, and she promised herself to read in the hour before dark; which she was not ready to do until it was too late to see.

She felt really unhappy when she knelt down at night, and remembered that it was the first prayer she had uttered in all day. Instead of praying heartily then, her mind wandered off into excuses for her neglect. It was right to study and employ her time, she said to herself; it was right to teach the poor and ignorant; and she would not forget again. Of that she was sure; but nothing, however good it is in itself, can excuse us from neglecting a duty which comes first; and all our best resolutions are useless in the end, if we do not ask God to help us keep them. More than ever in her life

before, Clara needed Heavenly wisdom and strength, and yet by *displacing* her prayer for guidance, which was certainly the first business of the day, it was neglected altogether.

Almost every country boy or girl has, at some time in their lives, tried to stop the course of a brook, that they might have a mill-pond to turn their water-wheels, or sail their boats. The slender thread of a stream that lost itself among the rocks, spread out into a tiny lake, and for the time every thing went smoothly. A single pebble might give way in the embankment, and scarcely be noticed, but though the water oozed and filtered through it almost imperceptibly, the earth growing heavy and sodden, or slowly mingling with the water, would in time yield, gradually at first, but faster and faster as the mimic tide gained strength, until all was swept away.

Those who have tried the experiment will better understand how Clara Sherman's good habits and desire of self-improvement slowly gave way, before the force of such bad examples. If she had watched for the first break in the barrier her education and instinct of what was proper and lady-like had raised against the faults in which her cousins indulged, she might

not have yielded at all. She was not conscious how far astray she had gone, although feeling dissatisfied with herself always, and very unhappy at times; yet she did not wish things were different so often. She made a great many new starting places, but there were difficulties in her lessons which discouraged her, and no one to explain them, no one to encourage her when she was trying to conquer the temptations to indolence and selfishness.

Charlie Sheridan had been sick, and his mother scarcely left the nursery for four weeks, after she had promised to come and see them; but Clara did not know this. Henry was the only one of the family who ever went any where, and he had not had occasion to go to the Furnace. At first Clara looked for her new friend daily, but as the weeks passed by, she began to think Mrs. Sheridan must be very neglectful. Margaret did not hesitate to say, that she believed Mrs. Sheridan had never intended to come at all, but this she would not agree to. She took care her cousins should not see she was watching for the visit, however, and finally gave up all hope of it.

A restless, discontented, fretful disposition began to spring up in Clara's heart, in place of

the gentleness and desire of doing right, that had been so remarkable as to attract Mrs. Andrews' notice, when the child was first put under her care. She had ceased to "keep her heart with all diligence."

CHAPTER VIII.

A GLEAM OF LIGHT.

"WELL, Fanny, what do you think now?" Mr. Sheridan said to his wife.

The visit had been paid at length, the very first time his mother had ventured to leave little Charlie under Maumer's care. Mrs. Sheridan had talked so much about it, and felt so interested for Clara, that her husband understood the silence in which they passed the first mile of their drive home.

"I'm very much disappointed."

"I knew you were—so was I at first; I had remembered the little thing so pale, and neat and shy."

"I was not sorry to see she is growing stout and healthy, but that flushed heated face, and disordered hair! I don't like to think about it.

I could not kiss her, and I do believe she noticed it, but I could not.

"I know she did. Her face spoke volumes. I don't know whether there was most surprise, pleasure, or mortification, at first seeing us; but I went out so soon. By the way, Fanny, young Sherman improves every time I see him. He is doing wonders with that farm, it is almost entirely in his charge. His father seems good-tempered, but very ignorant. He has Henry's natural good sense though."

"Ah!" said Mrs. Sheridan, absently. She was still thinking of the great change for the worse, which less than two months had made in Clara.

"I don't wonder at it though," she said presently.

"At what? that Mr. Sheridan has good sense?"

"Oh no, I was thinking about Clara; do you know that I'm almost sorry we went; I really feel as if I did not care ever to see her again. She is so different from what she seemed at first. I don't know now, how I came to take such a fancy to her."

Poor Clara! Her punishment would have been more than she could bear, if she had heard this conversation. At that very moment

she was crying bitterly with shame and disappointment. This was the visit she had so eagerly anticipated, and made such preparations for, over and over again. But to-day of all others, she least thought of, or was prepared for it. She had been with her cousins on a strawberry expedition all the afternoon; her pantalettes and apron were stained with the fruit, her dress torn in climbing fences. Her hair had not been touched since breakfast, and a crumpled frill was half turned in at the neck of her dress. Coming in flushed and heated, racing across the yard, as Eliza herself might have done, she came suddenly upon Mr. and Mrs. Sheridan, waiting for Henry, who had been called from the fields by Electra.

As Mr. Sheridan said, it was hard to tell whether there was most of pleasure, surprise, or shame in her face the next moment. She longed to turn and run away as Eliza did, when 'Lectra, highly delighted at the event, informed her that "there was folks in there."

Margaret showed much more self-possession, and was secretly delighted at her cousin's exposure. They seemed to have changed characters that afternoon. Margaret talked fast, and loud, boasting a great deal, in her way, of never having to do any thing. She wished

Mrs. Sheridan to see that her father was rich enough to have every thing done for them, for she had never been able to understand that their visitor chose to employ herself in household tasks.

"There," said she to Clara, as soon as they were alone, "I guess she knows that if we don't have a great big house, all fixed up, it isn't because we can't afford it."

But Clara was too much mortified and grieved to exult, or to take comfort out of any such feeling. The reproof of Mrs. Sheridan's grave look, and above all—the kiss withheld—had done its work. She went slowly up stairs, the tears gathering in her eyes, and the sob swelling in her throat; and she knew it was all deserved. That was the worst of it. She had lost the one pleasant hope of her present life. Ever since the first mention of Mrs. Sheridan's name, she had connected her with all her little schemes for improving herself, and those she lived with. Now there was nowhere to turn. Her face burned with flushes, as she looked down upon her dress, and caught sight of her face in the little glass by the window. Whatever way she thought of it, the shame grew deeper, and the future darker. "I did try," she said, aloud, and passionately. "It isn't

my fault! I can't help being wicked and miserable!" And she dared to indulge wilful, rebellious thoughts, that God did not care about her, or He would not have taken her mother away, and sent her where every thing was against, instead of helping her.

There was no comfort in this certainly; she was only stirring up more anger and bitterness in her heart. She might say that she could not help doing wrong; but that was not being sorry for neglecting what she knew was right. Our Heavenly Father never takes from us all light, though sometimes He sends twilight to see if we miss the day, and will try to walk more carefully when we know there is danger of stumbling. Clara was like a child placed in a cave and told that she should certainly find the entrance if she looked for it. But instead of following the clear ray, faint, but steady, which would have led her at once into the bright sunshine and open air; it was as if she had said—"I don't believe that is the way —I'm tired, and I don't mean to look any longer. It was cruel to shut me up here; they mean to let me starve, and stifle!" Such thoughts would bring real terror in the end, and so had her miserable doubts—she had lost sight altogether of the light, and was stumbling,

and beating, and bruising herself against the rocks!

When Margaret and Eliza came to bed they found her still dressed lying on the floor with her head on her arm, and her hair all tangled, and falling over her face. She was fast asleep, though she drew long sobbing breaths, and started and moaned when they tried to wake her. Eliza was frightened, and proposed calling her father and Electra, but Margaret understood a little of the trouble her cousin seemed to be in; not the disappointment, or the self-reproach; but vain people like Margaret are always easily mortified, and she thought Clara very silly indeed to care so much for such a proud, disagreeable person as Mrs. Sheridan.

It was very late when the girls began to dress the next morning. The boys had finished their breakfast, and were on their way down to Shermansville, where they were allowed to go whenever they pleased. They were going for fish-hooks, and Henry called after them to stop at the post-office, and their father said, "You'd better get back before dark." Those were their only orders for the day.

Electra came to the foot of the stairs for the fourth time, as the boys disappeared, and inquired "if they meant to lay abed all day?"

in no very gentle voice. Margaret was nearly ready to go down; and Eliza, still in her night-cap, sat on the floor lazily drawing on a stocking. The mate to it had disappeared.

"Where in the world's my stocking?" she said, reaching at the various garments about her in turn.

"Won't you just look under the sheet, Mag.?"

"Look yourself—I've got as much as I can do to keep track of my own. Come, Clara, its most noon; 'Lecta won't let the table stand all day."

Clara was thoroughly roused, but she did not want to talk; she only drew up the sheet so as to hide her face, as she turned to the wall." I don't wish any breakfast. I'm not going to get up."

"She's going to have a chill, I know," said Eliza, seriously; "that's just the way I always feel before I have one—as if I didn't want to stir."

But Clara knew nothing of the sickness so common in this region, and which Eliza's carelessness frequently exposed her to. All she wanted was to be quite alone; she was sick at heart but not in body. She tried to go to sleep again after they went down stairs, and forget

her troubles, but there was an intolerable glare of light from the window, and she turned and turned in vain.

It was after dinner time when she sat up in the bed, and looked around in a dull, hopeless way. It was an unlovely, disheartening prospect. Dresses, shoes, bedding, pieces for dolls' clothes, for which trunks had been searched, and their contents but half replaced, were littering the floor. Cobwebs festooned the walls, and the corners of the windows, which were so bespattered and streaked by rain and dust, that they were scarcely clearer than ground glass. It was a very large chamber, though so low, and she had once thought of asking Henry to have it divided into two rooms, so that she could have one to herself. The space she coveted was now filled with barrels and boxes, and broken chairs, such things as often accumulate in garrets. However, she knew she had not done as well as she might with what remained; or with her own things even, apart from helping or persuading her cousins to take better care of theirs. The clothes she had worn the day before, lay in a heap on the floor, just as she had stepped out of them; it was a carelessness she had never been allowed in since she could remember. When she was a little thing,

and could scarcely trot across the room, her mother taught her to lay every garment separately over the back of a chair, that they might be well aired in the night—to hang up her dress and apron, and to place her shoes and stockings together, by the side of the bed; so that no time might be lost in looking for things in the morning.

She rose and began to dress slowly. There was a string missing from her petticoat, and she knew it had been longer than her dress the day before, because she had pinned the band, and it had slipped down. The last hook was strained off of her dress. She had "burst it out," as Margaret said, for she was growing stout as Mrs. Sherman had noticed, with so much exercise in the open air, and she could not find her box of hooks and eyes to replace it. She could scarcely find any thing nowadays, among her own possessions.

"I will dress myself respectably at any rate," she thought; "even if it's no use now. Oh, I wish I knew where to begin; I wish I had somebody to show me. But Mrs. Sheridan won't care now, and there's nobody else."

With the humble wish, and the first step in the right way, came another thought. It was a recollection of a day in which there had been

a great deal of trouble at home, caused by the want of some money which her father had expected, but which was not paid. He was sick then, and often depressed, and he came home looking very ill and miserable. She heard him tell her mother all about it, for she was learning her lessons by the window, and she expected to see her mother sit down and cry. But Mrs. Sherman did not. She went to the little table where she kept some of her favorite books, and brought one of them open at a place where there was a book mark Clara had worked for her. She did not say any thing herself, but laid her hand softly on her husband's head, which was bent down over the table and read:

"God has more ways of providing for us *than we can possibly imagine.*"

"We are to depend upon His assistance—earnestly to ask for it, and cheerfully to expect it."

Clara could not remember the words now, but the thought that God had a great many ways of helping us, more than we know about, came like a comfort to her mind. She had a great deal of her mother's disposition; and it was only when she knew she had offended her Heavenly Father, that she did not trust Him.

It was now many days since she had opened

her Bible; it was covered with dust, and when she was dressed, once more clean and neat, she wiped the cover carefully, and sat down with it in her lap. The narrow blue ribbon marked the chapter which she had not quite finished, and the verses that followed told her that God cared for the birds and the lilies of the field; how much more for His children. There was a short verse low down in the next column, opposite to the end of this chapter:

"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."

Clara read it slowly, and she no longer hesitated to pray; she could not see how she was to get free of all these difficulties, but her Heavenly Father, who had thus taught her not to depend upon *herself*, was even then making a way for her.

What should *she* do towards it? Making her bed and cleaning up the room did not seem to be much, but that was all she could see now, and she began her work cheerfully. "I guess I will leave my trunk until another day," she thought, after her work was done—but, no, something whispered her to go on, and do all she knew ought to be accomplished. It was a sad task, for it brought before her mind how

much she had neglected, how very far she was from doing as well as when she first came, to say nothing of improving herself or others. She found she was not so much better than her cousins after all. Indeed, she was more in fault —they did not know how to do better. Her clothes were in a sad condition, nearly every thing needed repair. Rents that would have been little to mend at the time, had become almost unmanageable tears, her stockings lay in an untidy heap in her muslin tray, crushing the few clean frills and pantalettes that were in order; nearly every one of them wanted mending, and she was wearing odd ones for the same reason now. The neat new underclothes had gathered dust and soil on the top of her trunk, the lace was partly sewn on the sleeve of one, and the neck of another; that was all, just to see how it was going to look. She found the whole pile between her trunk and the wall, where they had slipped some time when the lid had been raised hastily.

It was a hard matter to arrange the trunk at best, it was so full. Clara thought again about the nails to hang up her dresses on; and as she went towards the window thinking where they had better be put, she saw her cousin Henry standing in the door of the carriage house, with a newspaper in his hand.

She scarcely stopped to think twice before she started to go to him, quite forgetting that she had had no food all day, but a piece of bread from the plate Electra had brought her at dinner-time, but which her sullen temper then would not allow her to touch.

"Oh, Henry," she said, quite out of breath. He seemed very glad to see her, being afraid that she was really sick; besides the way to Henry's heart lay in being cordial towards him, and not minding his reserve. Clara always seemed to like him, and he was ready to return any good feeling.

"You don't look sick," he said, putting down his paper. "I think you seem better than you have done for some time. What is it?"

So he too had noticed her untidiness. Clara was sure of it, from the way he looked at her dress now.

"I want some nails if you please, to hang up my clothes on."

"Who is going to drive them in for you? Yes, you can have some nails."

Clara had not thought so far. "Won't you come and see my room while I get them? you have never been here, have you?"

He led the way up stairs as he spoke. Clara

drew back for a moment, and then followed him. The room was roughly finished, and part study, part workshop; there was a bed, for he slept there, and guns and fishing tackle in one corner. A drawing board lay on a kind of desk before the window, though there were only a few lines and squares on the paper he had been at work with. A shelf of books, school books most of them, and some heavy volumes on mechanics and engineering, was opposite the bed. Clara gave a little sigh of disappointment, as she read the names of one after another.

"I do get so *hungry* after a story book," she said, as Henry noticed it, and turned around from his tool chest.

"I know how that is, but not so much for story books," he said. "Mother used to understand it, but father always thought buying books was a waste of money."

Clara had never heard him speak of his mother before. He did not often mention her name, but this mother was an ever-present thought in the mind of the son she had so greatly befriended. It was to her that he owed the education which had made him a thoughtful, though so far, a solitary man.

"I'm so tired of my history and geography,

and those old books on the bureau I don't feel the least bit interested in."

No wonder. Henry had found the collection of almanacs, dull sermons and essays, English grammars and antiquated arithmetics, dry as dust, long before her day.

"Haven't you some story books? I thought we were the only children in the country who never had any."

"Oh, plenty; but they are all packed up, you know."

"No, I don't know—where are they? Did you bring them?"

"That great big box? No, indeed; it's as large as that table."

"You must be very fortunate," said Henry, who thought she was exaggerating.

"There's father's, and mother's, and mine, you see; that made a great many."

Her cousin looked up eagerly, as if he had some of the "hungry" feeling himself. "Mrs. Jacobs said they could be sent any time uncle George wrote for them," Clara went on to say, "but I never liked to ask him. I've tried to a great many times. Sometimes I thought I would ask you."

"I wish you had; winter's coming, and then I read every scrap of a newspaper twice

over; oh, Clara, you don't know how I wish things were different," Henry said, with a sudden burst of confidence. "I'm so sick of this place, and sometimes I almost hate every one in it."

Clara looked up into his face, as troubled as he seemed to feel; she understood much of what he meant. "I've thought it over and over again, I don't believe the children would train so if they were sent to school. I saw Mrs. Sheridan this morning."

"Did you?" Clara's face flushed with her own troubles.

"Yes. I think she came down to the Furnace just to see me; it was very good, but I felt so ashamed of every thing here at home last night, that I could scarcely be civil. It is so different from what it might be, and ought to be. So I did this morning. I hope she won't think her trouble was all wasted. I'm sure I felt thankful to the very bottom of my heart. Most people would have been contented to despise us. What do you think she proposed?"

Clara rapidly thought of a variety of impossible things, such as asking Henry to come and live with them, because he was so much like themselves, or teaching the children herself, or sending them all her books to read! a

bright idea on which she had often dwelt in her day dreams; but she was unable to fix on any thing before Henry said—

"First she spoke about sending you and the girls off to boarding school; no, first she apologized for what she was going to say, though I am sure there was no need of it."

Sending them to boarding school? Her wildest flights had never reached that pinnacle of greatness. Clara fairly caught her breath.

"But then," continued Henry, "there were the boys, and leaving father all alone, even if he would consent to send so many away; so she said Mr. Sheridan and herself had thought that a governess would be the best thing, somebody who was old enough to teach the boys too, and manage them."

A governess!—that was almost as grand. Children in story books almost always had a governess, particularly in Miss Edgeworth's stories! "Oh, what did you say?"

"I couldn't say any thing, for I don't believe father would do either, and it all depends on him. I told her so at once; but she said she had thought of it, and if I liked the plan Mr. Sheridan would come round and see father himself. I asked *her* to come, for I knew mother could always talk father over where a man

couldn't move him; and he took a great fancy to her last night, I could see."

Henry seemed to be glad of some one he might tell this to. He felt surprised and grateful for the interest Mrs. Sheridan had shown in himself and his sisters. She had made him see delicately, but plainly, what the whole family were coming to be, if they grew up so lawless and ignorant; and spoke of Clara as she had first seen her; passing over the change she had noticed the day before.

It was this change though, and her first feeling that she would give up all interest in the child, which set Mrs. Sheridan to thinking what could be done to help these rich, but much-to-be pitied neighbors. She was the more in earnest, because of her first coldness towards Clara, which she knew was wrong; and Mr. Sheridan, really fond of Henry, talked over the ways and means, as much interested as herself.

So it was that what Clara looked upon as the end of all her hopes brought the first gleam of brighter days.

CHAPTER IX.

THE GOVERNESS.

It took more than one visit from Mrs. Sheridan to bring about Mr. Sherman's consent to the plan. She was prepared for opposition, and for some of his many objections.

"They was well enuff off—the boys never went to school now; and he was sure they never would mind a gal"—to which the boys, listening under the east window, entirely agreed. "Margaret and Eliza knew 'bout all they wanted now, and Clary more'n any on 'em, if she was Jim's darter, she couldn't help knowing enuff to last a woman." He had always held that, "ef a woman knew how to read and rite, and raise turkeys, that was enuff;" besides, "he didn't want a stranger about the house, and there was no place to put her."

As for the expense, "he never grudged money for "critters" (cattle), or land, or corn;

he'd got more land now than he knew what to do with, that last hundred and eighty acres he had to take of old Jenkins "afore he moved away to square up his debt." He did not mind spending money when there was any thing to be gained by it.

"Learning is better than house or lands," said Mr. Sheridan, pleasantly, quoting an old copy. But this Mr. Sherman by no means believed, and nothing but a more desperate quarrel than usual among the children, and a renewed resolve on Henry's part, of leaving home altogether if things remained as they were, gained at last a reluctant consent.

The most important of all Mr. Sherman's objections to the governess plan, was having no place for her. He occupied one of the beds in the large room, the boys the other. This was one of Henry's great trials. He and Clara had become fast friends now, and the annoyances that had vexed his temper so many years, and which he never could speak of before, came out one by one.

"It was all very well to live in such a crowded way when father first began the world, and lumber was scarce; but now there's no excuse for it."

"A bed in a dining-room isn't nice, is it?"

said Clara, who had been shocked at the arrangement at first.

"No, it is not even respectable, and I shall never be satisfied until father has another house, with plenty of room for every thing, and every body; but I can't ask too much at once, and—the lady—" Henry hesitated a moment what to call their expected guest, "must be disposed of some way."

Clara thought of the plan for her own accommodation. "Those barrels and things, if you had any place for them, up in our chambers, and then you could make a dear little room, with one window in it."

Henry was greatly relieved by the proposition. And the alterations were commenced at once, for he was to go to Louisville as soon as he could be spared, and bring back the lady Mr. Sheridan had written to her own family to select. He attended to the new room himself, and planed the partition neatly, hanging a nice door, with a bolt on the inside, and putting up a bookshelf like his own, for of course he said she would have books. He was to send some furniture by the first boat that left after his arrival, and he confided the whole arrangement to Clara, who was happier than she had been before since her mother's death. She had

a pleasant surprise too, on her own account. Henry had been going back and forth from the room so often that she scarcely noticed what he was about, and one day found a neat, strong table, for the wash bowl and pitcher, which had been her first improvement. He had noticed the need of it, and made it for her with his own hands. It was of plain pine wood, and unpainted; but she had never seen any thing she admired quite so much. Henry did not like being thanked, so she said little; but he could see what pleasure it gave her, and that was all he desired.

The new room was finished by the last of August, and Henry was at liberty to go to Louisville. There were some drawbacks to the delight of knowing he was really there, after he had gone. Eliza and the boys united in saying and doing all manner of rude things about the whole affair; and Mr. Sherman looked uncomfortable and restless, whenever the subject was mentioned. It was hard for him to have a stranger brought into his family, and to commence new ways, at his time of life. He felt as if all his liberty was going to be taken from him, and that he was to be put under uncomfortable restraint in his own house.

Clara did not exactly understand Margaret's

behavior. At times she would seem as eager and interested as Henry or herself—then again her sharp provoking speeches about Mrs. Sheridan and Henry for allowing her to interfere with them, and Clara for trying to get into the good graces of every body, would make Clara lose her temper entirely, and retort in a most unladylike and unlovely spirit.

It was a great day when the furniture arrived. Mr. Sherman sent early to the landing for it. He had a letter from Henry the night before, saying it was not put on board as soon as he expected, and they would be there almost with the boxes. One of them was strangely familiar to Clara; as she and Margaret went out to inspect them. She was sure she had seen it before. Yes, it was the box of books she had spoken to Henry about; her sole inheritance, from her father and mother; all the property she could claim. She could scarcely restrain her impatience until Henry should come to open it. Those that contained the furniture were soon knocked apart. Every inhabitant of the yard swarmed about them to look and admire. Even Aunt Rachel, whose health was improved by the warm weather, came tottering out on her stick, to see for herself the wonders 'Lecta reported from time to

time. Bel and Rod laid eager holds on every article light enough for them to carry up stairs, and if Clara had needed so much assistance, every field hand would have been honored in giving it. Electra's superior education, improved by travel with "mistris," shone forth upon Mary Jane, and Adeline—even Joe, her husband, who superintended the unpacking, was told, "mi stars! what did he know about such things, jest to do what was wanted of him and keep his tongue to hisself."

It was by no means a costly suite of furniture, though magnificent to the eyes of the simple-hearted farm negroes. Margaret watched every thing curiously, but would not commit herself to ignorance or admiration of any article. Henry had chosen a cottage set, which made the room seem very light and neat; and was more suited to it than dark or heavy wood. Clara was in her element; she left Margaret wondering over and walking around one box larger than all the rest, marked by Henry as not to be unpacked until he came, and set herself busily to arrange the room. Electra had contributed the handsomest patch-work quilt in her store, having her pride in the family aroused to its fullest extent by all these new arrangements. It was the last one Henry's

mother made, and had served to wile away many a weary hour of sickness. Patchwork is a tasteless and wasteful fashion at best, unless carried out in its first intention, that of saving scraps that would otherwise be useless; but this was of crimson French chintz, set together with blocks of white, and added to the cheerful air of the room. Clara had made a half curtain for the window of common muslin, given her by Electra from the household stores, always purchased by Henry on his annual trips to Louisville, and had enough put aside for their own room.

She was fully satisfied with Margaret's admiring stare when she called her to come and see the effect. Margaret had not recovered from her affront in having the matter given to Clara's charge sufficiently to offer any assistance; and her cousin had a great mind not to ask her to go out to the woods with her to gather late wild flowers for a bouquet, which was to stand on the little round table, as a final embellishment. It did not occur to her that they would have time to fade long before Henry could arrive if he held to his first intentions.

Margaret was tired of being by herself all day. She had looked in vain for the others, who had taken particular pains to keep their

present plans from her, as "she would be sure to spoil it all." They were down in the hollow digging and stocking a fish pond, which did not succeed very well. The water would drain out in the night and strand the unfortunate little minnows it was George's part to catch; and there was nearly as much work every day to be done as at first. The digging, and directing Albert, suited Eliza remarkably well, though, and her plans always lasted two or three days at least.

Margaret and Clara had really a very pleasant walk; wondering when Henry was coming, and what the governess would be like. "I'm sorry she's going to be old," sighed Clara, as she pulled a branch of shining green laurel.

"Is she though?—how do you know?"

"Oh, don't you remember Mrs. Sheridan said she must be old enough to manage Eliza and the boys? I know I shall be afraid of her."

Margaret delighted in that idea, not the age, but the government, though as applied to herself she would have been in open rebellion at once.

"I'm going to study French and painting, right off," said Margaret, who needed only these accomplishments in her own eyes to be made a young lady of.

"Are you?" said Clara, doubtfully. "Oh, mi, yes—you don't suppose I'd have let her

come a step only for that, do you? I guess not; and she needn't take any airs neither. If I don't mind Henry, I guess I won't mind *her*."

"I hope she will be like 'the good French governess.'"

Clara evaded the question of authority. She looked forward as a great relief and comfort, to having some one to tell her what to do, if she was not too severe. "But if she is a friend of Mrs. Sheridan's sister, I think she must be nice, any way."

The girls came out on the road with their arms full of evergreen branches for the wide fire-place, and late wild flowers for Clara's bouquet. Mr. Sherman had not read them Henry's letter, and to their great surprise they saw him just turning up the short lane with a lady walking near him. She wore a brown travelling dress, with a straw bonnet, and veil; her back was towards them, and she was not so tall as they had expected, scarcely taller indeed than Margaret, but with a full, rather stout figure. Both she and Henry turned as they heard voices and footsteps behind them; it was, indeed, the new governess, Miss Vinton.

Henry looked constrained and embarrassed. It was something quite new to him to have a

lady in his charge, or indeed to speak to one. He was heartily glad the little journey was over, and longed to find himself alone in his own room again. Miss Vinton did not wait for him to introduce them, as she heard his exclamation, "why, Clara," but came back a step or two, and held out her hand with a smile. Clara's gathering awe was dissipated, as she glanced into the pleasant face; but could it be Miss Vinton? this lady, so young and smiling, never could make Eliza mind, to say nothing of the boys. Henry, with some hurried excuse, went forward, and left them to come up to the house together. It was a wise movement, for it threw Margaret at once upon her teacher's notice, before she had time to put on the authority she had intended to show. If Margaret had known of Miss Vinton's arrival, she would have arrayed herself in all her beloved finery, to make an impression. As it was, she looked rather better than usual, in a clean dark calico dress and sun bonnet, which did not allow the use of the tall comb.

"May I carry it for you?" Clara ventured to say, holding out her hand for a small travelling basket.

"I think you have almost enough now," said Miss Vinton in so pleasant a voice that Clara

rapidly made up her mind "she was going to be lovely." Clara always noticed a person's voice, and thought she could tell a great deal about them from it, in which she was not far from right. Miss Vinton's was clear, cheerful and decided. That was like her disposition, but still her face was unfortunately young, considering the boys!

Margaret had been surprised into a silence that Miss Vinton took for shyness, and was at great pains to remove. On the whole, both the children made a favorable impression upon her, after what Mrs. Sheridan had written to her sister, that "they were a lawless and ungovernable family."

"I hope she won't mind the beds in the room, and the way uncle George talks," thought Clara, remembering her own first impressions.

If Miss Vinton did, even Henry, who was uncomfortably anxious upon the same subject, did not discover it. Electra, in honor of the unexpected guest, whose arrival was speedily known at the kitchen, made her appearance with a smiling salutation and the best tablecloth, which was a relief to Clara, who had looked forward with dread to the gravy and coffee stains of the one that had been in use through the week. Tea was always the most

comfortable meal at the farm. The children came in one by one, or were absent altogether half the time. Electra was famous for her waffles and light biscuit, and the table did not look so crowded or disorderly.

Clara was anxiously watching for an opportunity to show Miss Vinton her room, and was greatly delighted on being asked to do so.

"You have to go through ours," she said, when she found herself alone with her new acquaintance, on the stairs.

"Do I? then I am to have a room by myself—that's nice," and Clara only wished that Henry had been to see how surprised and pleased she looked when she saw the arrangements that he had taken so much pains to make for her comfort.

It was indeed a surprise, after the family room she had seen, to find herself ushered into such a neat, tastefully-furnished chamber; and she had dreaded—noticing the two beds below—having to share one with her pupils.

"Will you wait while I brush out my hair, and tidy myself a little?" she said, as Clara turned to go down stairs again. "I think you arranged this room, and I wonder if some of those flowers were not intended for it."

Clara wondered how she had guessed both

things so correctly. Miss Vinton went on talking about the wild flowers and the woods, as she took down the great mass of curls that were turned up over her ears in a bandeau. Clara thought she looked a great deal prettier when they were hanging down about her face, and so she did, but altogether too young for a governess. She had been obliged to think for herself, and take care of herself for some years, and it had given her the independence and decision that belong to older people usually. Still, there was not the least shade of coarseness in any thing she did or said.

For the first time since Clara's arrival, the family sat down at the table together; the younger children not having yet made their appearance. Miss Vinton had been placed near the tray, where Electra usually stood and poured tea for whoever wanted it. It was a very awkward arrangement, making a great deal of waiting and confusion. Certainly, there was to be no end of wonders. Clara could scarcely believe she had heard aright, when she saw her uncle pass his cup to Miss Vinton, in one of Electra's excursions to the kitchen, and say, "I guess you'd better sit round there, and pour out for all on 'em." Henry looked up surprised, and apparently as much pleased as

herself, and Miss Vinton had too much good sense to hesitate, seeing there really was no head to the family.

It was a little thing, but it amounted to the fullest sanction of her authority; and when the unconscious Eliza and her company made their appearance, they found her as much at home as if she had always belonged there. There was nothing for them to do but to fall into the ranks, for the present, at least.

CHAPTER X.

MISS VINTON'S PLANS.

The new governess soon saw that there was a battle to fight, but she chose stratagem rather than open war. It was not her first experiment in teaching, although she looked so young. She studied her pupils all through the evening, though to them she seemed only talking about Louisville with their father. Henry was right, when he said a woman could manage his father best. He was one of those people, rough in themselves, yet liking gentleness and sprightliness in others. Henry did not come back to the house, and Mr. Sherman seldom left it after night-fall. Evening had been a dreary time to him since the death of his wife. Usually he sat down in front of the door in warm weather, or in one corner of the fire-place in winter, and bending forward, he would sit rubbing his hands, thinking or dozing, for hours together.

He, like the children, had expected to find a much older and graver person in Miss Vinton; some one who would talk of nothing but books and education, as *he* understood it; a dry, set plan of certain studies to be gone through with, and which would only betray his ignorance, about which he was really sensitive. This cheerful, sensible girl, who could tell him how Louisville had grown, and what gentlemen thought of the prospect for the produce business in the winter, was a different person altogether, from the starched schoolmistress of his imagination. She drew him on to talk, too—asking him for reminiscences of the city, when it was scarcely more than a village, and of the Western country, as he first saw it. As all old people do, he liked to talk about his youth, and he found an interested, intelligent listener. It was something new to be treated with such gentle deference and attention. Margaret had never heard her father talk so much to any one before, and listened almost as quietly and respectfully as Miss Vinton. Clara could not help catching Margaret's hand, and squeezing it once or twice in her delight, at every thing in general, and that Miss Vinton did not mind uncle George's odd ways, especially.

"Wait till school time comes though," said

Margaret, when Clara's raptures overflowed the next morning. She even slipped into Margaret's bed to talk so that Miss Vinton might not overhear them, a piece of neighborliness she had never been known to commit before. "I've seen people that was all honey one minute, and you had to look out the next."

But school time did not come that morning at all. Henry spoke to Clara about her books at the breakfast-table.

"I suppose you will want the box opened before I go out, won't you, Clara?"

If he had asked her the morning before she would have said "yes," at once; but she had found time for grievous doubts and forebodings. *She* had always been taught that books were precious, and to be handled carefully; but what was to become of them if her cousins were at liberty to touch and take at any time; or where in that overflowing, littered house, could room be found for them, free of dust and damp. No, they were doubly precious in Clara's eyes, and though it seemed selfish and ungrateful, she was sorry Henry had sent for them.

She began to say something, when she found every one was looking at her, but she choked, and coughed, and finally broke down.

Miss Vinton did not understand her trouble, or Henry either. They both thought it was the recollection of her orphanhood brought back, by seeing things which had belonged to her father and mother.

"I expect that huge-looking box I stumbled over this morning is a bookcase then," said Miss Vinton to divert her attention; and noticing that there was none in the room.

"Yes," said Henry quietly; "I thought we should need one."

A glow of pleasure shone through Clara's misty eyes. How good and thoughtful Henry was, and yet so still, and never seeming to notice any thing.

"Unpacking books—that's just the thing you would like to help us do, I'm sure," said Miss Vinton, noticing signals exchanged between the ditchers and fishers, and adroitly intercepting the retreat they had planned to their pond. George looked sulky at being for the first time directly addressed, but Albert, rather tired of working under Eliza's arbitrary rule, thought it might be "good fun."

"*I* ain't going to stay, any how," said Eliza doggedly, and kicking George under the table at the same time to come with her.

"Oh, we would not think of asking you

to"—said Miss Vinton, quickly. "I spoke to the boys."

Eliza's crest-fallen look at being thus "let alone severely," arrayed Margaret for the time on Miss Vinton's side.

"*She* don't know one book from another; but where's the bookcase going? I don't see any room."

Henry had provided for that also, by getting his father's permission to have the desk removed to his room. The drawers were used for no special purpose, but hoarding odds and ends, and the papers in the desk would be safer in his territories.

The bookcase made a great change in the room when it was fairly set up, but it was scarcely an improvement, all the other furniture looking so odd and unsightly by contrast. Even Miss Vinton, who found from Clara that Henry had selected the furniture of her room, was surprised at his choice. It was of solid black walnut, beautifully finished; there were no elaborate and tasteless carvings, but any one familiar with such things could see at a glance that it was costly, and very much out of place, if its life was to be passed in such surroundings. However, she was not called upon to say so, and soon had all the children

but Eliza, who chose to sit and look on, busily employed in filling the shelves.

George's roughness, and Albert's carelessness, which made Clara wish at first that she could have done all herself, were at once noticed and corrected; but so pleasantly that neither of them resented it, and they afterwards tried to show that they were taking pains to please her. Margaret being taller than the rest, had the upper shelf in charge, and filled it under Miss Vinton's direction. Clara was perfectly satisfied when she saw her treasures in the hands of one who evidently valued them for themselves, if she had not the home recollections that made them so sacred to the child. Mr. James Sherman had been self-indulgent only in books, and their friends in Pittsburgh had reserved all of the miscellaneous part of his library. It was most happily selected, and Miss Vinton felt, as she came upon one and another old favorite, as Robinson Crusoe probably did when he found the ship's stores, that provisioned him on his desert island.

"Shouldn't you like to understand all about these things?" she said to George, who had paused to look into some volumes on botany and ornithology, with colored plates; and Albert was stimulated with the promise of seeing

a large book on Arctic adventures, full of illustrations, at some future day.

As for Clara, who might have been expected to be most zealous, she gave out sooner than any one. She dipped into almost every volume she took up, coming upon one and another she remembered, until she was finally startled from the seventh chapter of Picciola, by Miss Vinton snapping the key in the lock as her self-appointed task was completed.

"I think you had better let me be librarian and keep the key, Clara,—I see you are provided for the present."

"Please do,"—and Clara relieved of all her disquietude, relapsed into the history of *la pauvre petite*, the pet and companion of the prisoner Cherney.

The books proved a grand starting-point in the school history. Miss Vinton did her best to rouse the interest of the boys in their contents, and talked about China, and told them curious things about the way of living there, which her brother, now in Macao, had written to her. Albert began to think that sort of geography was almost as good as a sea story, the only kind of literature which had the least attraction for him. The boys brought their school books of their own accord to show

to her in the evening—miserable dogeared volumes, far behind the age, as dull, and dry, as school books used to be twenty-five years ago.

"I hate 'populations' so," said Albert confidentially. "I never could remember."

"Well, I don't know as it would do you much good if you did," said Miss Vinton; "as it changes, in this country at any rate, so rapidly; but geography is not all 'population,' and lengths of rivers. These were my dread when I went to school. Isn't that table rather full already, George?"

George was emptying his pockets of a two days' accumulation of pebbles, bits of rock, curious wood moss, and odd-looking twigs. George had a fancy for such things, and it gave his teacher a clue to what would most interest him as a study.

Miss Vinton began to think that it was almost time to arrange some regular plan for occupation; Clara had wondered more than once why she did not begin; but she could not understand how carefully the tastes and dispositions of each child had already been studied. Margaret desired to commence being accomplished at once. Miss Vinton had shown them her water-colored drawings, the French letters,

and Latin exercises she had written at her age.

"Are we going to begin right off? Oh, good, I'll run and get the books; I want to study French for one thing. Isn't it on your bureau?"

"But this is Saturday morning, not Monday," said Clara, wondering if Miss Vinton had forgotten the day of the week. It was contrary to all her school-going experience to commence on Saturday.

"I shall not expect any recitations to-day, but I think we might as well settle what we are to study. Don't go for the books yet Margaret; the first thing to be done is to get our schoolroom a little in order."

"Oh, Electra, and 'Bel, and the rest do all that!" said Margaret pausing, with her hand on the door.

"Then we must wait every day I suppose until they have their breakfast, and find it convenient to attend to us. What time does Electra usually come back?"

"Just as it happens," said Clara, who saw she was expected to answer. "Sometimes not before she is getting dinner."

"That will never do, never," said Miss Vinton decidedly. "I think I shall have to make

an arrangement with Electra to sweep, every morning before she goes to breakfast, and lend me 'Bel as an assistant, to do the rest; you can take that time for your own room, and then we shall be all ready to commence in good season, and regularly. I expect if you find me very severe about any thing, it will be regularity."

"Why?" asked George, greatly interested in seeing Margaret expected to mind as well as themselves.

"Because, we shall never get along without it; and shall only be in each other's way. I did ask Electra to do something for me yesterday; to try and have breakfast ready every morning at the same time; seven, I think, while the days are so long, but then we shall have to be up to eat it."

"I don't mind how long the table stands," said Eliza rudely. "I always get up when I feel like it."

"Well, I *do* care," said Miss Vinton, taking no notice of the way this was said; "and at eight o'clock every day, I expect to see it put back there for my desk. I dare say Electra will always give you something to eat in the kitchen." This was meant for Margaret and Albert, quite as much as Eliza, and they began to understand from Miss Vinton's manner that

whatever she said, would be done. She had expected the sullen looks which followed her first rule, but she had seen such things before.

Clara thought it was perfectly right, but she was afraid she should be in disgrace more than once, she had fallen into such idle habits, in that respect; as to cleaning up their room, it was no hardship; she had never neglected it since the day of Mrs. Sheridan's first visit.

Electra was quite willing to place 'Bel under Miss Vinton's charge; "more trouble'n she's wuth, though—so's all on 'em—never see sich a set. Joe, my ole man, wouldn't care ef they sot the house a-fire over his ears; 'spect they will some day," she added, to her gracious promise of "finding up 'Bel," and making her "tote right along up to the house." 'Bel's idea of clearing off a table differed from Miss Vinton's considerably. Clara admired the patience with which her teacher set to work to instruct her, even down to brushing the table-cloth with a turkey's wing, there being no crumb brush, before she took it off.

"Mi, why aint it good 'nuff to shake right down onto the floor?" said Electra, who had remained in her usual easy position, leaning against the door with folded arms, while the first lesson was in progress.

"It's too good—that's the thing," said Miss Vinton, who had noticed that in addition to its natural soils, it usually drew up the dust from the floor three times a day, in shaking and folding. "Now, see, 'Bel; so, take it by this crease in the centre, instead of at the ends, and fold it over the table. When we get a clean cloth to-morrow, we are going to keep it clean."

"I guess the top 'that are book thing's good as any place," said Electra, pointing to the bookcase, where she had already commenced her storage of various household wares.

"No, that is mine, and I shall not allow any thing but books to come near it. Margaret, just get a chair, and take down that box of blacking, and those other things. 'Bel, put the table-cloth here, on the lower shelf of the closet; now *always* put it just there, after this; by and by, when your dishes are washed, I will help you set the shelves to rights."

Electra took all these innovations good humoredly. If Miss Vinton had commenced showing *her* how to do things, she would probably have resented it. As it was, she walked off to the kitchen, and actually began to wash up the dishes at once, to have them ready for 'Bel's second lesson.

"And now," said Miss Vinton to the children, who had stood by to watch the proceedings, "we will have those books, Margaret. Yes, you may bring down my paint box, and all you find on my trunk."

Margaret passed through their own chamber, and could not help seeing the contrast as she opened the door of the inner room. The window was up, and the wind blew out the white curtain against the neatly made bed. No untidy hair pins and brushes were suffered to stray before the dressing glass. Miss Vinton had written a letter already that morning, as well as put her room in order, but the little leather writing-case was closed and locked, and the books were piled neatly around it on the table. Margaret had never been in Miss Vinton's room alone before, and her untrained spirit of curiosity, led her to take up the little volumes one by one. There was a Bible, and all the rest were books of devotion, or sacred poetry. The shelf was well filled besides.

"She's dreadfully particular, worse than Mrs. Sheridan, just one of Clara's sort," and a conviction that Miss Vinton asked no more of them than she did herself, began to dawn upon Margaret's mind. Every moment since the arrival of their governess, Margaret had seen

the dividing line between Clara and herself more plainly. She had felt it first, the afternoon her self-love was so wounded at Mrs. Sheridan's; and now that her cousin came into Miss Vinton's ways so easily, and they seemed to understand each other so well, though her jealous disposition could not accuse their teacher of showing undue partiality, it puzzled her more and more.

Margaret had come to the conclusion to be a lady, at once; her ambition being thoroughly roused. Clara had never studied French, and knew nothing of drawing. If she began to learn those, she reasoned, she would soon astonish Henry and every one else; and she changed her mind about the watch, and concluded she would have a piano right away, instead.

"I'm only going to take drawing and French," she informed Miss Vinton, as she laid down her burden upon the table. Her teacher did not even suffer herself to smile at Margaret's self-satisfied air.

"Very well, in the first place, here are some pencils and note paper; now I wish each of you to write me a note, a regular note, you understand, and tell me what you would like to study, as Margaret has."

Eliza found herself omitted in the distribu-

tion. It was quite as well, for both paper and pencil would have been useless to her; she could not even write her own name. Miss Vinton did not know it, but she wished Eliza to understand that if she wanted to study, she must ask it as a favor. She did not notice her sullen looks as she sat perfectly still for a while, and then started off out of the house, feeling herself very much ill used, and more miserable than any severe punishment would have made her.

The boys made quick, but sad work with their notes. George could write better than any of the younger children, but his words were mis-spelled, and his capitals misplaced. He began with a grand flourish:

"Dear teacher,

i am well and Hope you Are the same—i want—

botany!
jology!!
and about
bugs!!!
& spiders!!!!"

by which last he meant entomology, of which Miss Vinton had told him. It was signed:

"yours &c.
George Sherman."

Albert could only make "printing letters," as he called them. Miss Vinton managed to guess out, "voyages and travels," and the "multiplication table." This last Albert added from a feeling of necessity, and to make up for what he feared were not quite orthodox pursuits.

Clara's note was very nicely written, folded, and addressed. She, too, included French, for Miss Vinton had told her that there were many other stories in the language quite as interesting as Picciola and Paul and Virginia.

Margaret was the most unsuccessful of all. She nearly bit her pencil through; she marked over the basket of flowers stamped in the corner of the pretty sheet; but it was no use; she was ashamed that Miss Vinton should see her awkward, illegible handwriting, or see the ignorance she displayed in spelling the most common words. She was more really humbled than she had ever been before, to be surpassed even by George; and Miss Vinton's object was gained, by proving to her that it was best to omit the French and drawing lessons for a while, until she could spell her own language correctly, and write so that it could be read. Her teacher was very careful not to wound her feelings, by any comparison between Clara and herself; she was sufficiently mortified to find she could

not overtake her cousin, even by the greatest exertion, for a very long time.

"Custard is very well in its way," said Miss Vinton pleasantly; "but one cannot live upon it; so it is with accomplishments. They ought to be our amusements; but not our chief business. Let us have the solids first in their place, by all means, and we shall enjoy the dessert more. But there is one thing, the most important study to every one, that none of you have remembered."

Neither could they think of it now, not even Clara, or George, with his random guesses. The boys were quite won over, not by any love of study, or desire for improvement; though botany was a great inducement to George; it was their boyish admiration of Miss Vinton herself that made them vie with each other for a place in her good graces. George presented her with beetles and snails, as a proof of his devotedness; and Albert's yellow locks were daily teased into something like order; his face and hands washed before meals (when he did not forget it), and he was in private treaty with Adeline to make him some collars. Miss Vinton had shown him an India ink drawing of her brother when he was about the same age, and Albert wanted the collars to be made

of that exact pattern, very large, and ruffled all around!

"Yes," said Miss Vinton, presently, after they had had time to think again—"not one of you remembered, that we ought first to study our Bibles well, if we desire to make good progress in any thing else."

"That's not a study book!" said George, boldly.

"What do you study at all for, George?"

"I don't know; I never did—just because people *do*, I suppose. I never could see any use in learning lessons, only to make boys mad!"

"What is your idea, Clara?"

"Oh"—and the little girl sighed with a remembrance of former weariness,—"I used to say just as George does; but father and mother both tried to make me understand that God meant us to be useful in the world, not just to amuse ourselves."

"But studying isn't being useful," said George, who had much of Henry's natural good sense and cleverness.

"I didn't finish," returned Clara, a little sharply; she did not exactly know how to make herself understood.

"Clara means that we cannot be useful to

ourselves or others if we are ignorant," said Miss Vinton; "isn't that it, Clara?—because to be useful we must know how to make the best use of our minds, and bodies, of every power, or faculty God has given us—'talents,' the Bible calls them. Our memory, our understanding, our hearts, that is, our dispositions, all have to be trained. This is education; not learning a few lessons in history or geography to repeat by rote. Every thing has its place in our characters as well as our studies. We must find out what the place is and keep it there."

"Not our faults, I guess," said Clara, who understood her teacher better than the rest.

"Our very talents become faults when they are out of place." Miss Vinton spoke for Clara alone in this; she knew the others would scarcely comprehend. "Our ambition becomes selfishness and vanity, if we do not keep it down by the golden rule for loving others, and serving God. When we do, it helps us towards both."

"What do you intend to be when you grow up, George?"

But George had never thought so far.

"I'm going to be a sea captain!" Albert had long ago made up his mind.

"Well, you will have to study navigation then, and understand the use of every rope and

spar in your vessel. Suppose, instead of these things, you would insist only on learning book-keeping, and Spanish—they would be the very thing, for a merchant, and of some use to you; but you would be entirely unfit for the business you intend to give your whole life to."

"I thought you were going to tell us why people ought to study the Bible," interrupted George, who thought Miss Vinton had forgotten about it.

"Yes,—well, our lives, our whole lives, are only a school-time; and the Bible is the only book of instruction we have to fit us for the business of eternity. Don't you think we should be very foolish to omit altogether in our daily studies, what is as necessary as navigation would be to a sailor?

"Besides," said Miss Vinton, noticing the flush on Clara's cheek—it was not the first time she had heard this—"we shall find it will help us in every thing, even in learning our lessons, and doing all we undertake thoroughly."

"I'm sure I don't see," said George, shaking his head, and not at all convinced.

Miss Vinton had not expected that he would at that time; neither did he understand why she went on to arrange their lessons so carefully, that no task should crowd or interfere

with another. He thought she was taking a great deal of unnecessary trouble, and that she could see; but she hoped in time that all her pupils would find there was a use for every study she had given them, and why *the Bible held the first place.*

CHAPTER XI.

CHRISTMAS SURPRISES.

The winter which Clara had so dreaded, when in the long summer days she wondered what would become of her, shut up in the house with nothing to do, came, and was slipping rapidly and pleasantly by.

A regular school-room, which was greatly desired by Miss Vinton, had been arranged out of one of the numerous cabins, forming the yard. It was roughly finished, and very plainly furnished, but warm, and light, and they were secure from the frequent household interruptions, that tried Miss Vinton's patience in the dining-room. It was a good plan for many other reasons; Mr. Sherman was in the house a great deal in winter time, and he could now sit in his corner by the fire unmolested. The boys had no lessons in the afternoon; the girls sewed, and Miss Vinton read aloud. Eliza

had surrendered at discretion, when she found that she was to be left entirely alone, and though she was a dull scholar, she was very quick with her needle.

Margaret decidedly objected to this part of Miss Vinton's course of instruction. It was bad enough to be marked if her bed was not made, and her clothes put away; but to be required to do plain sewing, after all her boasts, "was a little too much." However, time and firmness brought her to this, and even to having some pride in making a set of nicely finished underclothes under her teacher's direction. Miss Vinton lost no opportunity to put down Margaret's vanity, and to cultivate self-respect. It was that which the whole family needed when she first came to them, except Henry.

It was uncomfortable to her, and she *did* mind, eating in the room where Mr. Sherman slept, seeing him come to table without a coat, or draw off his boots, and "sit in his stocking feet," as children call it. The first she could not help; but she made a pair of plain cloth slippers, very large and loose, with the help of the postmaster at Shermansville, which he put on to please her at first, and had worn ever since because he found them comfortable. She

had now serious thoughts of attempting a chintz dressing-gown in hopes of like success.

Electra had gradually given place to 'Bel, in the table arrangements, when she found how much trouble it saved her. Electra hated trouble in any shape, and 'Bel and 'Rod were beginning to do credit to their daily drill, as waiters. The meals were well served, and Miss Vinton's lessons in "table manners," though directed principally to Albert and Eliza, were not lost, even on Mr. Sherman himself. Moreover, in writing out a list of housekeeping articles that were wanted for Electra, Miss Vinton had added on her own responsibility, "salt spoons, butter knives and napkins." The table, in its arrangements at least, would now do credit to any establishment. Henry no longer felt inhospitable, if a stranger happened to be on the farm at meal times.

One dark, cheerless December afternoon, Clara and Miss Vinton sat alone in the school room. Work was finished for the day, but Clara had a scheme of surprising Henry with a Christmas present, and wishing to keep it from all the others, had begged permission to sit there after school. From the time Henry had made Clara the pine table, indeed from the Sunday of

church going, she had greatly desired to give Henry a present.

She could not settle on any thing for a long time; she had no pocket money, and she never thought of her father's books as really her own to dispose of. But one fortunate day, she came upon a roll of canvas and worsted which had been given her by the lady she staid with after her mother's death, Mrs. Jacobs. It had been useless to her, in her ignorance of shape or pattern, but Miss Vinton furnished both, and agreed with her in thinking that Henry would be delighted with a pair of slippers to wear in his room.

Clara was stitching away contentedly on a purple diamond in fire-shades, that was to alternate with a green diamond, to be filled up in the same manner; when the window was darkened for a moment by some one passing. Her precious secret was on the point of discovery. It was Henry himself. She had scarcely time to call out, "Oh, Miss Vinton," and throw worsted, canvas and pattern under the desk, before he came in.

She might have spared herself any alarm. He did not even see her at first, but walked straight up to Miss Vinton's table.

"You will not object to a ship letter, I

suppose," he said, handing her an envelope covered with curious black foreign stamps and postage marks.

"From brother John—thank you—oh thank you." She might well thank him, for he had ridden into Shermansville in the face of a cutting wind, and up to his horse's knees in mud, only because he knew how anxious she was about that very letter.

Clara had never seen her governess show such eagerness about any thing before; she broke the seal and began to read without another word.

Henry waited. He had a note also to deliver.

"Oh, I am so thankful!" she exclaimed, at the first three lines; but as she read on, a shadow came across her face, and she laid the letter down slowly, remembering that Henry must have something more to say to her.

"No bad news, I hope,"—as Clara said, Henry always noticed every thing.

"No, yes—well it is all good news, I suppose. John will be here in the spring, and, he says, to take me away with him. He has been very fortunate; I ought to be thankful for it, and to have a home once more."

"Oh you won't go!" said Clara, starting

forward. What should she do; what would become of them all! just as they were going on so nicely.

Henry started too, as he saw Clara for the first time, at least she thought that was what made his face change so. But he said nothing, and that seemed very strange, and as if he was quite willing that Miss Vinton's brother should take her away.

"Here is a note from Mrs. Sheridan; I suppose I know what it is about," he said, the next minute. "I had one too, an invitation for Christmas."

Miss Vinton took it, but there was no eagerness about this letter.

"Perhaps you had better read it now; I am going to send Joe over with my answer early in the morning."

"I can scarcely decide so soon,—yes,—well,—I will tell you at tea time, will that do?"

"Oh, that will be nice; I'm glad she's asked you, and I hope Henry will go," said Clara, as he disappeared; and without one thought of how dull it would be for herself.

"She has asked me to bring Margaret, and you, and to stay all night. Shall we go?"

Could there be any hesitation about an ac-

ceptance?—no indeed, as far as Clara was concerned. Mrs. Sheridan had been over two or three times to call on Miss Vinton, but Clara had never been there since the memorable day of the thunder shower. She longed to see the dear little children again, and even Maumer seemed like an old friend.

It was only the fear that Henry's slippers would not be done in time, that restrained Clara's impatience for the day to arrive. But it did come at last, and Henry had remembered all the family with some little gift; Miss Vinton had evidently been consulted in the selection. He had not expected any thing, and Clara's slippers were a grand success.

He did not say much about them at the time, though he complimented her by putting them on directly. Oh, how they fitted! Clara wanted Miss Vinton to come and see!—they had had such a time to abstract a boot from his room as a guide to the shoemaker; but Miss Vinton was contented to sit still and take her word for it. However, after dinner, at Mr. Sheridan's, when it was scarcely dark enough for the lights, and Clara, having had a "go-to-bed-play," with Charlie in the nursery, came back to the drawing-room just as the gentlemen did, Henry came towards her.

"Margaret seems to be getting on very well with Mr. Sharp's sister, doesn't she?" he said, sitting down by her on a lounge.

There were several other visitors beside themselves. Mr. Sharp, the lawyer from Shermansville, who had his sister with him, a boarding-school girl, tall and showy, though not so old as Margaret. It was to meet her Miss Vinton's pupils had been invited; and Margaret looking very unlike our first acquaintance in a dress of Miss Vinton's selection, and her hair nicely braided over her ears, was making rapid progress in "a friendship" with her.

There were two other ladies, Clara had seen them at church before, their husbands, and the clergyman who still preached on in the little log school-house. None of them were to pass the night however, but Miss Sharp, and themselves.

"It's a pity slippers are not the thing for dining out," said Henry, the next minute; "I should like to wear mine; do you know, Clara, it is the very first Christmas present I have had since my mother died, or present of any kind."

Clara nestled a little closer to him, so glad and proud. It repaid her for the hurry and worry she had gone through with for fear they

would not be done in season, because she had to steal the time if she desired to keep her secret.

"Mr. Clay is talking about Christmas presents now," spoke Henry; "that is Mr. Clay by Miss Vinton; the lady at the piano, turning over the music book, is his wife."

"I do not approve of them at all;" Mr. Clay spoke, in a loud voice, in reply to something Miss Vinton had said. "This fashion of presents is all nonsense and extravagance."

"It is often made so, I know," Miss Vinton answered. "But, in itself, I think there is nothing more likely to create and keep alive the kindly love, without which a family is such only in name. We were talking of making birthday and holiday gifts," she explained to Mrs. Sheridan, who came up just at that moment.

"Doesn't Miss Vinton look sweet," whispered Clara, as the bright coal fire flashed up, just revealing her fair, animated face. She was dressed in a plain black silk, without flounces even, but her neck and arms were uncovered, their fairness contrasted with the dark dress; at every movement the curls were suffered to fall down too, much to Clara's delight; and she wore some holly berries and leaves in the heavy bands in which the mass of her hair was disposed.

"Isn't she the prettiest lady in the room?" said Clara, with renewed admiration taking in all this, as she watched her earnestly.

But Henry did not answer; perhaps he did not agree with Clara, and disliked to hurt her feelings by a difference of opinion.

"Extravagance, extravgance, that's what it leads to, it's the sin of the age!" said Mr. Clay, sternly. "We were all better off in the good old times."

"Of steel forks and log cabins!" said Mr. Sharp, with an unpleasant expression, and his eyes fixed full upon Miss Vinton's face.

"Yes, sir; yes, sir, that's my view." Mr. Clay was delighted at finding some one to second him. The extravagance of the age was his favorite hobby, though his carriage-horses were valued at fifteen hundred dollars, and his wife always sent to New York for her bonnets and mantillas. "The good old times, the good old times!—there's nothing like them."

Henry's eyes flashed at Mr. Sharp's impertinent speech and stare. He knew whom it was intended for.

"I cannot agree with you," said Miss Vinton, quietly. "Rude simplicity comes first, but education and refinement should certainly follow; nor are they the less prized by those

who have had to struggle against circumstances that hindered the development of taste."

"I agree with the young lady," said Mr. Tomes, the clergyman. "God hath made every thing beautiful in its time,—we must not forget that. He is not the author of confusion,—He gives us flowers and fruits as well as grain. He saw that it was *all* good."

Miss Vinton looked towards him gratefully. "You know I did not mean wanton waste, by the right indulgence of taste. I hold that it is a duty to share of the abundance God may reward diligent labor with."

"Miss Vinton will be wanting us to build you a Gothic church next!" said Mr. Clay, bowing, and thinking he was paying a well-turned compliment to both his opponents; "though for my part, the school-house is good enough for me; good enough for me—I can learn all I want to in it. These costly churches, sir!—"

And he made a sweep of his hand as if he would clear the county of them.

"Just so much money thrown away—might a great deal better be given to the poor, sir."

"Why, that's just what Judas said," whispered Clara to Henry; they were both listening deeply interested, and nearly every one in the

room had gathered about the speakers. Margaret and Miss Sharp had gone off up stairs to look at the latter's new winter bonnet and cloak she had bought in Cincinnati, where she was at school.

"I should be on Miss Vinton's side, if she did want a church built, and one that would last too," said Mrs. Sheridan.

"Yes," and her husband smiled one of his good-humored genial smiles, "I can answer for that, I've heard nothing else for a year."

"Oh, wouldn't that be lovely, Henry? You know what *I* said."

"With a church and an academy, I believe we should soon have a different neighborhood," said Mr. Thorn, another of the guests. "There's scarcely a respectable farmer in the county, but that is able to contribute towards both, and now their children are growing up perfect heathen."

"I do not think my people will always be contented to remain as they are," said Mr. Tomes, to whom this was addressed; "and if any one desires to see a commencement made, they can remember what was said of old, 'Whereas it was in thine heart to build an house unto my name, thou didst well that it was in thine heart.'"

"Yes," said Miss Vinton, softly, "David's ready offering of gratitude for his prosperity, I always delighted in. The tabernacle was well, while they all dwelt in tents, but how soon after they came to build palaces, he said, 'Lo, I dwell in a house of cedars, but the ark of the covenant of God remaineth under curtains.'"

There was a hush in the confusion of voices for a moment, and then some one proposed music. It was Mrs. Clay, who did not care to hear her husband get the worst of the argument. Mr. Sharp came over to the side of the sofa on which Henry was sitting.

"Speaking of building," he said, "when is your father going to commence?"

"There is nothing decided," said Henry, coldly, and vexed that their private affairs should so soon get abroad; but the village lawyer was well named, nothing ever escaped him.

"Mr. Clay thinks he's getting a bargain out of you in that Jenkins farm," continued Mr. Sharp, determined to find out all he could.

Clara, greatly astonished and excited by his intelligence, longed to have Henry to herself and ask him if it was really true. She wondered what made him so cross with Mr. Sharp, when he only said, "ah, does he?" and got up and went away. Mr. Sharp was not

one of her favorites either; he had been at the farm several times lately. He was old-looking, for so young a man, with a keen, and at times, stealthy expression, in his gray eyes.

Miss Vinton began to sing at that moment, and Clara was thankful that he went to the piano; she was very much afraid he would offer to take Henry's seat. Miss Vinton had sometimes sung for them at home, sweet, low hymns, on Sunday evenings, which Mr. Sherman seemed to like as much as any one; but she had never heard her with an accompaniment before; and the full clear notes thus sustained filled up the measure of her enjoyment for the moment; but the next came the thought of the cruel brother John, who was coming in the spring to carry her away from them.

She was to share Miss Vinton's room that night, an unlooked-for pleasure. Mrs. Sheridan gave Miss Vinton her choice of companions, but Margaret had already settled it with Miss Sharp, to be her room-mate. Clara felt very much obliged, and kissed her cousin good night, with a great deal of warmth. Margaret had got on very well through this visit, considering all things, though it would not have increased her amiability, if she could have heard Mrs. Sheridan's exclamation to her governess, at the

sight of her neatly arranged hair and dress, "My dear child, you have worked wonders! I should never know her!"

There was something so thoroughly comfortable in having Miss Vinton all to herself, and in such a lovely room, a cheerful fire upon the hearth, and candles upon the dressing table, that Clara thought it would be impossible ever to go to sleep. She looked at the fire reflected in the large swinging mirror, at the long, full chintz curtains, that gave such a peculiar coziness to the room, and then at Miss Vinton, brushing out her hair, with a quiet, thoughtful look, to be sure it was not really a dream.

"Don't you wish this was our house, Miss Vinton, that we had one just like it, I mean, you know; and you had just such a room, and was going to stay always?"

"It would be very nice," said her governess, laying down her brush, and drawing the eager, excited child to her side with a kiss. "It is very pleasant to have it mine for one night, and have you with me, where I can tell you what a comfort and help you are to me, Clara."

"Me! Oh, I know I give you a great deal of trouble sometimes."

"You! yes, dear, and to all your uncle's

family; Henry loves you as well as if you were born his sister."

"Oh, do you think so?" and Clara's eyes shone almost as brightly as the candles in the mirror. "And, Miss Vinton, do you really think uncle Sherman will let him build a new house? Mr. Sharp said so."

"Did he?" said Miss Vinton, with a start.

"Yes, and then you will always stay with us, won't you?"

"What would become of brother John?" and though her mouth smiled, the dreamy look came back to her eyes. She was still sitting by the fire when Clara dropped asleep, much sooner than she could have believed possible.

CHAPTER XII.

THE TITLE DEED.

STRANGE as it might seem, Mr. Snarp's news was true. Mr. Sherman had given his consent to building a new house, on condition that Henry could raise what money he required from the Jenkins farm, which was just so much more land than he really wanted. He had taken it for debt in the first place, paying the difference between the mortgage which he held and the value of the property.

He stipulated another thing: that he was not to be troubled, even in giving his advice about any thing connected with it. How his consent had been obtained, no one but Henry knew; but it must have been a powerful argument, although Mr. Sherman had come into so many new ways lately, that the neighbors did not wonder quite so much as they would have done a year ago. Still it caused quite a stir among

them, and Mr. Clay, who had made an offer for the land, seemed to think he had the best of the bargain.

Margaret took "airs" forthwith, and when Miss Amanda Sharp came with her brother to see them, invited her to pay a visit as soon as "our new house is done." It was well for the permanency of Miss Sharp's friendship, that there was such a prospect; for her astonishment and disgust at their present style of living she took no pains to conceal.

Clara's satisfaction was quieter, but deeper. She saw that a new social life was before them all; and she knew how greatly Henry's heart was set upon it. He seemed like another person now, open and cheerful, even talkative, when the subject of conversation was the house. Clara was honored by going with Henry and Miss Vinton, when he came to ask her governess to walk with him, and see the site he had selected; but so greatly did he esteem Miss Vinton's opinion, that he would not decibe until he found that it agreed with his own. It was on the opposite side of the lane, and just at the crest or brow of the little hill. There were a few trees near it that had been spared by some accident, in clearing the meadow, which it then was; and Henry thought

an opening could be made through the woods so as to get a glimpse of the river. Clara listened in delight, to hear them talk of a lawn, and shrubbery, and garden; but what would Mr. Sherman have said, if he could have known that such extravagant projects were in prospect?

Henry had commenced drawing the plan himself, and had sent to Louisville early in the winter for some books on country houses, and on one of these models his own was designed. He brought it into the school-room, where Miss Vinton usually sat after study hours, when they came home. Clara did not make much out of the lines and dots, but she supposed it was all right, as Miss Vinton approved of it, making a few suggestions at Henry's wish, about a store-room, and what was to be the ordinary parlor.

The spring was opening fast by this time, and Henry talked of breaking ground at once. He had sent orders for builders and lumber already, and now all that remained to be done was to transfer the deed of the Jenkins farm to Mr. Clay, and receive the money which lay ready in the Clarksville Bank. But for that unfortunate brother John, Clara's cup would have been running over. She longed to ask Miss Vinton what she intended to do, but she did not dare to speak of it first. All she knew

was, that Mr. John Vinton was not expected as soon as he had hoped to be home, and she tried to rest contented in thinking that the evil day was far off. But—when he *did* come!—what could prevent his cruel purpose? His sister and himself were quite alone in the world, and he had exiled himself for five years to make a home where they could live together.

"Are you going this morning, Henry?" she asked next day, as she was crossing the yard, loaded with her school books; but she was sorry that she had said any thing as soon as she had spoken. He had one of the old cross looks, and answered her very sharply. Something was wrong. She stood on the step of the school-room, and watched him talking a long time, in a very excited way, with his father. Then they both went back to Henry's room. He came out by himself after a while, and drove off furiously towards the village.

He did not return until after tea, and he looked so tired and worried, that she knew the trouble was not over, whatever it might be. He had been to Clarksville, the county town, fifteen miles away. Mr. Sherman was out of temper too, more so than Clara had ever seen him. Miss Vinton looked unhappy, as if she understood Henry's anxiety, and was sorry for

him. It was the beginning of a very uncomfortable week, and ended in a great disappointment.

The house was not to be built after all. Henry wrote to Louisville to countermand his orders. Mr. Sherman went about uneasily, looking into every closet and chest, opening the same one, and taking out the same things, ten times in a day.

There was a general lamentation when the bad news came out. Margaret remembered all her boasts, and found her plans of future display suddenly cut down. Clara grieved over it in secret, and it was some consolation to find that Miss Vinton seemed as much disappointed as herself. The anxious, wretched look on Henry's face, when he came from Clarksville that first evening, never left it. He no longer joined them in their botanizing expeditions as he had done of late, or came in the sitting-room at night. His one idea seemed to be keeping out of the way as much as possible.

But what had happened? A great loss which made Mr. Sherman unable to afford building, unless he sold a part of his farm, or some of the stocks in which he had invested his ready money from time to time, neither of which he would do. Nothing less than the en-

tire disappearance of the title deeds to the property Mr. Clay wished to purchase. He was sure they had been made out, and properly signed and witnessed at the time. Henry could testify that he had seen them again and again, but that was no security to Mr. Clay, and Mr. Sharp, as his legal adviser, wrote to Henry, declining the whole transaction. It made the disappointment greater to come through him, for he had never shown Henry good will.

At first they hoped the deeds had been recorded in Clarksville, when copies could be had that would answer every purpose. Mr. Sherman could not remember about it, but he had not done so. He had not thought it "worth while" to take the time and trouble when it came into his possession in the midst of harvesting, and it was afterwards altogether neglected. All trace of Mr. Jenkins had disappeared in the thirteen years that had passed since, and it was one chance in ten if he could ever be found again. Mr. Sharp proposed advertising him, though he said "it would take time and money." The money was the least part of Henry's anxiety. It would be months, if not years, before there was any hope of success.

"What are deeds like, Henry?" asked

Clara, when one day he had asked her to ride with him, and on their way explained a part of the difficulty.

"Papers, and they ought to have been put up securely. But that never was the way at our house; every thing was always left lying round. I used to tell father; I dare say Electra took them to light the fire with."

Clara rode on in silence for a while. They were going to the Post Office, a daily errand of late, and she was thinking of all that had happened since her first drive to church, over that very road. Now, all the family but Mr. Sherman went regularly, and there was peace, and order, and improvement in the household. All accomplished in a little more than a year, and through Henry. She might have added, her own example, and the interest Mrs. Sheridan had first taken in the family for her sake. But Clara was always humble, and too thankful for the change, too grateful to God for answering her many prayers, to consider herself in the matter. She was very thankful that morning, notwithstanding the great disappointment they had been talking about.

"God *has* a great many ways," she said to herself. "I believe he can help Henry find Mr. Jenkins, if it is best. I wish they would

try. I wish I could do something to help them, they have been so good to me. Uncle George is *real* good, and Henry particularly."

She was holding the reins quite bravely. Henry had gone into the Post Office, and was looking over the unsorted letters and papers himself, while the little bald-headed shoemaker was measuring a customer for boots, on the other side of the room.

Thinking over the many changes since her arrival, a recollection of the day itself came back vividly, and of her dismay at the rude ways of her cousins. How they had fought over that kite.

That kite! papers—title deeds! Had not Eliza taken some papers out of the desk drawer for a tail? In an instant she jumped out of the buggy to tell Henry the sudden hope that these might be the very title deeds. But what if they were—and instead of hurrying into the shop, where he stood with his back towards her, she stopped by the horse's head, for had not the kite been broken up, and tossed away that very Sunday? Even if it was under the lumber still, and there was a very slender chance of that, the rain and snow would spoil paper.

It required almost more than a childish effort of will to keep all these thoughts to her-

self, when Henry came, and wondered to find her out of the vehicle. But she knew it would be cruel to cause him a second disappointment, and thought she would look the instant they reached home. The pile of lumber was still there, stained and blackened by winter storms, but there was a difficulty Clara had not thought of. It was but partly finished, when the kite was thrown on to it; the men had gone on next day, and heavy boards rose above the logs and beams on which it was caught, as she saw it whirled over the fence.

If she should tell Miss Vinton, their united strength could not lift one end of the boards, and if she asked the men to help her, Henry would know, and after all, there was the very least chance that it was still there, or of any use when found. Henry gave her the papers, there was no letter for any one, and hurried off to the fields. Joe came to put up the horse, there was no one to watch her. She made sure of this, and then walked round and round the pile in vain, stooping down to pry into the crevices, and essaying to lift or even tilt the boards on top. She might as well have tried to move the barn itself.

Joe, whistling away to the horse, as he rubbed him down with a wisp of hay, was the only

person in sight. He would help her! But then Henry might come back. She thought of asking him to come at night, when every body was in bed; but there was no moon, and even if she found it, she would not be able to know whether it was of any use before morning. How would early in the morning do?—very, very early—just daylight. Only *would* Joe keep it to himself, and should she wake up in time? How should she be silent all that time? Few children could have done so, but Clara had always been taught self-restraint, and now the great fear of giving Henry another disappointment helped her. She did not tell Joe what she wanted of him, when she asked him to meet her just there, the next morning at daybreak, and not to tell any body on any account, that she wished him to do something for her.

Joe showed his white teeth in many a half-suppressed chuckle, as Clara impressed this hurriedly upon him. He "tort 'twas mighty curous in Miss Clary any way, but she could 'pend 'pon him."

"And be sure you get up in season. Oh, do, Joe," said Clara, almost in an agony of entreaty.

"I 'spect 'twon't be dis chile 'till break dat harf de bargin," and Joe's curiosity arose to

such a pitch that it would have acted as an alarm-clock, if he had not been so desirous to please Clara, who was a great favorite in the kitchen, from old Rachel, of whom she was no longer afraid, to the six months old George Osborne Vinton Napoleon Levi Joseph Francis, the youngest of Electra's flock.

Instead of over-sleeping herself, Clara could scarcely lose consciousness all night. She started constantly from confused and feverish dreams, in which she was crushed under beams, or flying from a falling building, to stare out of the window, straining her eyes into the pitchy darkness; and when her vigil was rewarded by the first faint gray twilight of the earliest dawn, her hands trembled so with eagerness and agitation that she could scarcely fasten her clothes. It was still quite dark, and at any other time she would have been afraid to cross the yard at such an hour; but now she thought of nothing but the fear that Joe would fail to keep his appointment. He did make her wait some time, shivering in the cold morning air; it seemed like hours, instead of minutes, before she saw his slouching figure, wrapped in a loose gray coat, come shuffling along the yard. He did not half like his errand when he found what it was to be, and cold and sleepy as he was,

grumbled incessantly because she had not told him to bring assistance, and would not let him go now for one of the field-hands.

"Tumble them off any way. I know you can—oh, please do! Henry would be sure to wake up if you called any body. It's getting so late too, and the dogs are barking. Come, please do, Joe."

"Marster Henry 'll be in dis nigger's wool, any way," muttered Joe, "'sturbin' his property! He haint been so mighty good-natured no how, dese days!" and as the first board clattered to the ground, Clara expected to see Henry's window fly up, and himself appear forthwith. But no one was roused, and the work went on a little faster as Joe found himself fairly committed to the task.

Clara watched his progress, talking, encouraging, exclaiming, walking back and forwards, with feverish impatience. It seemed as if he never would come to the beams. And her hope deserted her, as he did approach them—no trace of the kite as yet, and how the water seemed to have soaked and filtered through the boards!

But they began to look fresher, less weather-stained, as one after another toppled over. Oh, there it was—no, only a crumpled newspaper

lodged there by the wind! Yes, "Oh, Joe!" and the next moment the mutilated fragments were in Clara's hand. The newspapers with which the kite was covered, were fairly washed away, but the tail, towards which all her thoughts had been directed, lay spread out on the upper beam, and had been perfectly protected from the rain by the broad planks piled above and around it.

She recognized the same yellow, crumpled paper Eliza had taken from the drawer, torn and twisted, the fragments united by the knots of twine, and they might not all be there. Still Clara could make out "the aforesaid Thomas Jenkins," and again, "George Sherman, his heirs and assigns forever." She was sure enough of her good fortune to tell Henry at least, and not even heeding Joe's numerous questions, she left him perfectly mystified, and flew towards the carriage-house.

Henry was scarcely less astonished, and really alarmed, at being roused from a sound morning sleep, by violent blows, and shaking of the door below, to find Clara standing under his window, in the misty morning light, her long hair flying about her shoulders, and calling him with all her strength.

"Oh, it's me! come right down, Henry! I've found the deed!"

CHAPTER XIII.

THE ENCHANTED CASTLE.

Just two years from the time our little friend first arrived at "Sheridan's," two gentlemen were walking on the upper deck of the "Magnolia." The boat looked as if it might be the "Reliance" itself, as it came sweeping past the cotton-wood trees, with their huge twisted roots washed bare, and bleached in the storms and sunshine of many seasons. There was the same hoarse puffing of the machinery, the same cloud of soot and cinders streaming from the smoky chimneys, the same slow tremulous revolutions of the great stern-wheel. Few passengers cared to take a boat that made so many stoppages and depended chiefly on freight, so that the two gentlemen who were promenading the deck, though strangers before, had seen a great deal of each other in the last few days, and a mutual liking had grown up between them.

"You are sure this is 'Sheridan's?'" asked one of the other, as the bank, crowned by its pile of "pig iron," ready to be carried up the river, came in sight.

"I cannot be mistaken; this is my thirteenth trip down the river, and I remember this place particularly, because of landing a nice little girl here about two years ago, belonging to Mr. Sherman, an old settler."

"That is the very family I am bound for," said the other.

"Oh," and if Clara had been there, the dry tone and shrug of the shoulder, would have made her sure it was Mr. Bowen, if she had not recognized him before. The other gentleman was not so old, though browned by the hot climate in which he had lived. It was Mr. John Vinton, just arrived from China, after repeated delays.

"I should like to know something about the family; I have a particular reason," he said.

"Well, if it is there your sister has been teaching, she has had a nice time of it, I expect,—my little friend excepted. I'm glad to hear it for her sake. The rest of them are sufficiently rough."

Mr. Vinton looked annoyed; but it was quite time to attend to his baggage, which was

tolerably bulky, including a huge camphor chest, which looked suspiciously, like "presents."

"I don't mind walking on, and showing you the road. Your trunks will have to wait till called for," said Mr. Bowen. "People never know when to expect these boats, they run so irregularly. How long do we stay, Captain?"

"Half an hour," said the Captain, carelessly. "Milk and eggs for these women and children."

"Oh," and Mr. Bowen laughed as they crossed the plank, "that means till sunset at the very least. This way, Mr. Vinton, up the bank."

It was a little later in the month than the day of Clara's arrival. The foliage was fairly out, the ground a tangle of strawberry blossoms, blue violets and anemones; the shade and coolness were very refreshing after the glare of the water, and the heat of the Magnolia's furnace fires. The gentlemen walked leisurely on, burdened with carpet-bags and outside coats, belonging to Mr. Vinton, which Mr. Bowen insisted on helping him carry. He liked his late fellow-passenger, his frankness and cordiality, his boyish delight at being once more in his own land; he wanted the walk, and he thought he might get a glimpse of Clara.

They had gone about half the distance, according to Mr. Bowen's remembrance, when a roomy family-carriage, coming towards them, filled up the narrow road, and forced them to step aside from the track. Two young ladies were on the back seat, a boy in front, and the gentleman who was driving; but just as it passed, the horses were brought to a sudden stand, by a simultaneous exclamation from the carriage:

"Oh, it is John!" "Why, Mr. Bowen!" Clara's memory was quite as good as that of the long-separated brother and sister; but Mr. Bowen never would have recognized in the tall, well-grown girl, who claimed his acquaintance, the child he had once explored that very road with.

Mr. John Vinton sprang into the carriage, and the seat Clara quickly vacated; his arm was around his sister, and her hand trembling in his; they had forgotten for the moment that any one was by to witness the joyful meeting. Clara was too excited with her share of the adventure to cry, as she always thought she should certainly do, if she happened to be by at the arrival.

"Here's plenty of room by me, Mr. Bowen. Henry, this is Mr. Bowen, that brought me here: do jump in."

But no; Mr. Bowen explained that he was only taking a stroll, and piloting a fellow-passenger.

Henry seconded Clara's invitation cordially, with all the proverbial warmth of Western hospitality. The reserve and bluntness of Henry's manner had almost disappeared. Mr. Bowen was puzzled to connect him and the handsome establishment which he drove, with the family of the Mr. Sherman he had seen.

Just then Miss Vinton found a place to say, "and this is Henry." The two young men had evidently heard of each other before. Mr. Vinton's hearty hand-shake across Clara, and Henry's cordial welcome were all that any one who wished to see them become friends could desire.

Mr. Bowen found himself unable to resist the united entreaties of the whole party, at least to drive home with them, if he would not suffer them to go to the landing, and order his baggage ashore with Mr. Vinton's. He was not averse to seeing more of Clara, whose grateful recollection pleased him, and if by any means he could discover where *this* Mr. Sherman and his bay horses sprang from.

The road was not much improved, and they jolted along merrily enough, Mr. Vinton keep-

ing fast hold of his sister's hand, as if fearing to lose sight of her again; but when they approached the lane, Mr. Bowen found the horses' heads were turned in the opposite direction from the stile he was looking for. Workmen were busy at a neat, ornamental fence, on the opposite side of the road, and a handsome house, half cottage, half villa, had sprung up, as if by magic, in what was a meadow, when his first visit had been paid.

The house itself, with its broad porches and piazzas, was completely finished, although the lawn exhibited signs of recent ploughing, and there was a pile of ornamental trees, not yet relieved from the mats and strings of the nursery garden. The horses sprang across the ploughed land, as if it had been gravel, and before Mr. Bowen had time for questions or explanations, they had stopped before the principal entrance, which stood ajar, and gave a view of the broad, well-furnished hall beyond.

Some garden seats and a lounging chair stood on the piazza. On the first, work and books were lying, as if some one had just gone into the house. The last was filled by the Mr. Sherman Mr. Bowen *did* remember, sitting literally, in "slippered ease," and not in the least disconcerted by the arrival of strangers.

"Glad to see you, sir; been lookin' for you some time, some of us have," he said, as Mr. Vinton was presented to him; and his keen eyes recollected Mr. Bowen, after a moment's pause and study, as the same gentleman who had brought Clara to them. Mr. Bowen had every reason to be satisfied with his reception on his chance visit, but he had not yet recovered from his surprise.

Miss Vinton disappeared with her brother, going through the hall with his arm around her, and looking unspeakably happy.

Clara claimed Mr. Bowen as her visitor, and Henry seconded her invitation to enter the house.

"We won't go into the parlor," said Clara, "because there's only the carpet down there yet, and the curtains up; the furniture hasn't come, but it's going to be lovely, I know. I shall always like this side of the house best; just look, Mr. Bowen; this is the sitting-room, and that wing is uncle George's bed-room, because he doesn't like stairs, but we've fixed it up so nice and comfortable, he says he doesn't know himself."

"I should scarcely have known him, or you either," said Mr. Bowen, passing on, as she went to the dining-room for a glass of water.

'This is a pretty room. Whose house is it, Clara? I suppose I ought to say Miss Sherman now."

"Please don't," and the blush which Mr. Bowen so well remembered, whenever she was teazed or excited, came up into her face, making her more like the child he had disliked leaving there to her fate.

"It's uncle George's house to be sure. Henry built it though. He's uncle George's oldest son, you know. What did he go back for? oh, to have Joe bring in Mr. Vinton's things."

"Well," said Mr. Bowen, looking about at the prints on the walls, and the handsome walnut furniture, that suited the well-filled bookcase, "I think you and I have found the enchanted castle at last, Clara."

Clara's eyes flashed with sudden comprehension. "Isn't it beautiful? I can scarcely believe it is ours yet."

"Then you feel quite at home here now?"

"Oh, yes, indeed, and I'm very happy, Mr. Bowen."

He could see that she was, without any assurances of it in words.

"But there's Henry looking for us," and without any more explanations, they returned to the piazza together.

"You have a fine place here now," Mr. Bowen said, to Clara's uncle, as he sat down beside him.

"Wall, yes, ruther, it's all Henry's doing though. Young folks seem to git their own way, some how." His manner was an odd mixture of pride and bashfulness, at his new surroundings, though he looked entirely at home, and very comfortable, in his loose linen coat and felt slippers.

"You have not asked me any thing about Mrs. Andrews," Mr. Bowen said to Clara, as Henry began telling his father how they had met Mr. Vinton, though they were on the road to the landing, 'Rod having been stationed down by the river for the last two days to give the first intelligence of a steamboat making for the shore.

"Oh, have you seen her? do tell me all about them."

"Yes, I met them quite unexpectedly at the Burnett House, in Cincinnati, last week. They were going East for the summer. Mrs. Andrews spoke of you, and said she often wished she could hear whether you were happy and well."

"Both," said Clara, decidedly. "How I should love to see Julia and Dolly Dumpling again."

"That's the baby. Oh, she's quite a great girl now, but just as chubby as ever. That is a very good name for her. Augustus is going to be left in Philadelphia at school. Your friend—"

"Julia," prompted Clara.

"Yes, Julia, she's nearly half a head taller than you are. But you have not explained the enchantment yet. Where's the magician?"

"There's two of them," said Clara, catching his manner. "Henry and Miss Vinton."

"I suppose you think 'twas considerable for me to do." Henry had followed Joe to the stable, with an apology for his short absence, and an earnest renewal of his invitation to allow him to send for the trunk, when Mr. Vinton's baggage was brought. Mr. Sherman was equally urgent, but Mr. Bowen was obliged to decline.

"Considerable," repeated Mr. Sherman. "Wall, I did think I should live an' die by the old place, though 'taint so fur off nuther. You see this is the way it happened. Henry, he sot out, he wa'nt goin' to ask that handsome little woman to marry him, ef he hadn't a decent house to put her in," and he nodded towards the stairs, up which Miss Vinton had just passed.

"That's the way of it. I could afford to

spend money, rather than give her up after she got 'Liza and the boys in hand."

This was a new revelation to Clara. She had always wondered how her uncle had ever been induced to consent to the plan which had made them all so happy and comfortable, especially since Miss Vinton had promised never to leave them, and was really going to be Henry's wife. No wonder he felt so badly when the deed was lost, and staid away from them so much. But she was recalled to the present, by hearing her uncle say:

"Clary's the one to thank for it after all, though. You brought good luck with her that day, I guess."

Miss Vinton was down stairs again, just in time to hear Mr. Sherman say this, and paused by the door, with the coat-brush she had been in search of.

"I think a blessing came with her at least. I have always said that, Mr. Bowen."

Years before, a lonely, sorrowful, dying woman struggled through tears, for faith to trust the orphan child she was so soon to be parted from, in her father's hands. She had nothing to leave her but a mother's faithful teachings, and a mother's earnest prayers.

"Oh, my Father," she said, "the way is

thorny, and her feet are tender; the night is dark, and her strength small. But thou hast all tenderness, all knowledge, all power! Lead her gently, keep her near to thee, help her to trust and pray, as I have done. Thou canst supply home and friends, and grace to keep her in the right way. Be with her unto death, and grant that into whatever house she enters, thy peace may be upon it."

And thus was the mother's prayer answered and acknowledged.

Stranger as he was, Mr. Bowen felt that Clara's presence had in some way chiefly contributed to the great change which he saw on every side.

"I am very glad I came to-day," he said, as she parted from him in the wood, where Henry and Miss Vinton and her brother lingered behind, absorbed in their own happiness. "I shall carry away such a cheerful recollection, instead of the little white, miserable face, that looked out of the door after me two years ago."

"Oh, there's one thing I forgot to tell you." Clara also forgot that Mr. Bowen knew nothing of Shermansville or its original destitution; he seemed to take such an interest in all her affairs, and was so associated with her first coming there.

"They are really going to build a new church at the village, and Henry is to draw the plan. Uncle George is going to give a great deal. Don't you like uncle George now?"

Mr. Bowen was amused at the emphasis on "now;" he never had expressed an opinion before, but he understood that Clara thought Mr. Sherman had improved as much as the fortunes of the family, as indeed he had, in the kindly and gentle influences his future daughter-in-law had surrounded him with. It was not altogether a dread of misrule that induced him to agree to Henry's wish for a new house. His fondness for Miss Vinton was evident in every way, and now he would yield to a suggestion from her when Henry's arguments could not move him.

If this was a novel, I should go on and tell you all about the wedding, which had only been deferred for Mr. Vinton's arrival; how Margaret, and Eliza, and the boys were on their good behavior, and that all the Christmas party were invited guests, even Mr. Sharp, who however declined. Mr. and Mrs. Sheridan were there of course, for they were chief friends at Sycamore Hill, the name they had all agreed upon for the new house.

But "there is a place for every thing," and

I have tried to show how necessary it is that every thing should be kept in its place. This is only a story-book, and young people always think weddings dull affairs. So we will part with Clara and her companions by the road-side, as Mr. Bowen did, satisfied to believe that her future life could not fail to be cheerful and useful in the happy home she had at length found.

THE END.